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POEMS NEW AND OLD.

MARCUS S. C. RICKARDS

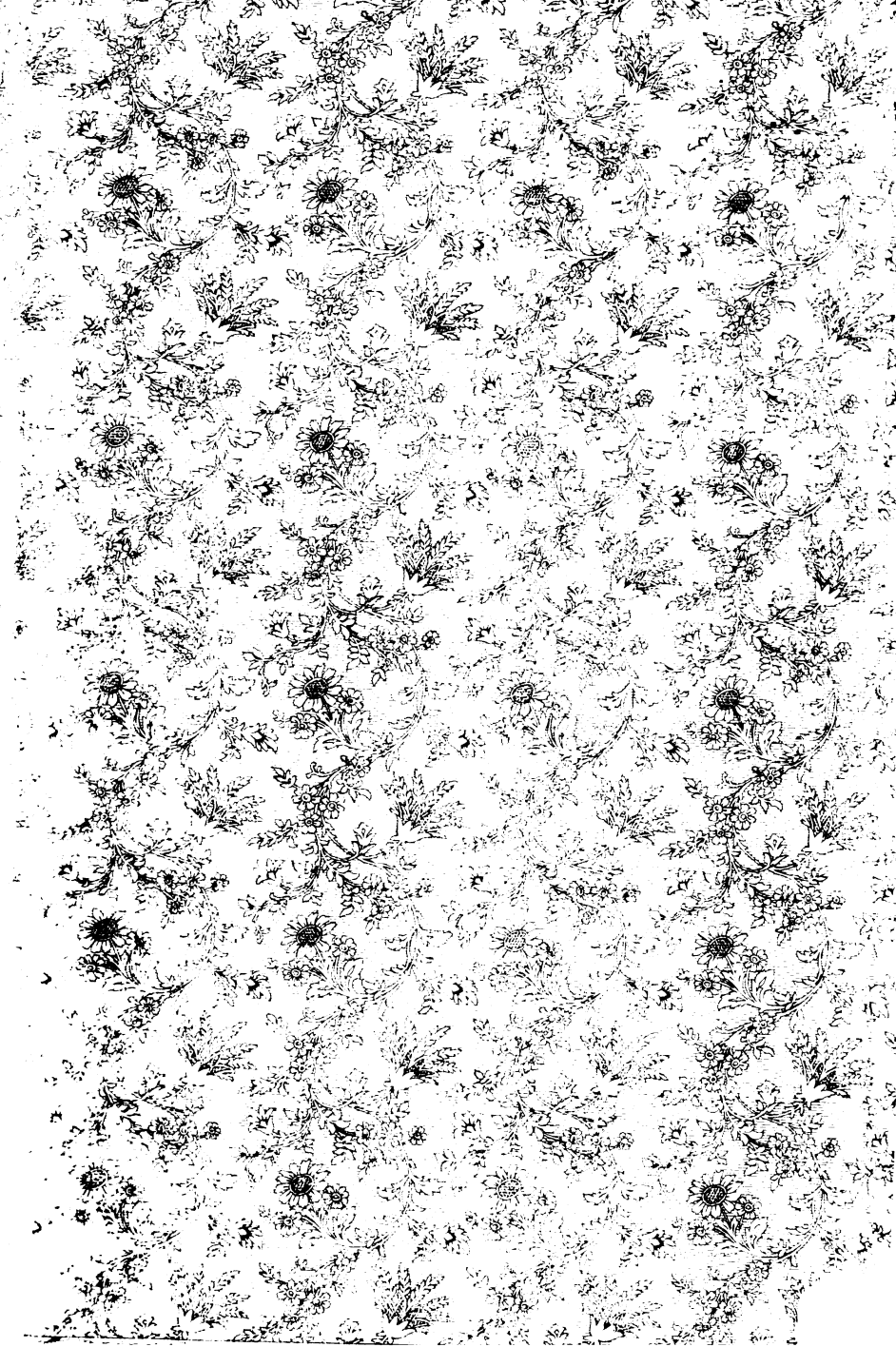
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POEMS NEW AND OLD

BY

MARCUS S. C. RICKARDS

AUTHOR OF

'CREATION'S HOPE,' 'THE EXILES,' ETC.



CLIFTON

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LONDON

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AND GREAT CRITICAL CAPACITY

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PRELUDE

As in the Tale Divinely told
A 'scribe instructed' will unfold
Discreetly things both new and old
From his wise treasure,
This tuneful volume doth contain,
With many a fresh melodious strain,
Much former music sung again
In truer measure.

Some readers, in the new may see
The note of less spontaneous glee,
Yet find a riper dream, more free
In rhythmic fetter :
While others who peruse in haste
May let the new wine run to waste,
And lightly vow that to their taste
'The old is better.'

Yet pass not either, old or new,
And bring a palate trained and true !
The banquet spread for all of you
Is love-begotten ;
My worthiest I freely give ;
May much of it in memory live,
And naught be wholly fugitive,
Or quite forgotten.

NEW POEMS

PENUEL

‘THE FACE OF GOD !’ It dawned upon me first
In babyhood ;

For all that on my early vision burst
Was ‘ very good.’

The blue or grey above, the green I trod,
The rustling trees, the flower-bespangled sod,
The mountain stream and lake, reflected God
In every mood.

He beamed upon me in a mother’s eye,
A father’s lip,
A hundred hands held forth in rivalry
Of fellowship.

He shone around me thro’ my childish joy ;
And mid the frolic of a growing boy
A ray from Him lit up the game, the toy,
The pleasure-trip.

And oft to cheer me when the wine of life
Was sadly spilt,
I felt Him smile ; yet knew Him frown in strife
With early guilt.

NEW POEMS

In opening manhood, free to make my choice,
Mid many a tone that bade my heart rejoice,
There thrilled a tender captivating Voice,
‘ Ask what thou wilt !’

Whatever I preferred, He gave me health
And spared me ruth ;
Hope, cheer, and zeal, He added to the wealth
Of happy youth.

This, tho’ I craved not Wisdom for my lot ;
Or if I did, her lore I heeded not,
And oft in Error’s winding ways forgot
The path of Truth.

Yet, wrong, He strove to win me for the Right
By many a mode ;
And won, He kept my wavering in sight
Along the road ;
While ever and anon the guardian Face
Flashed forth to steady me in equal pace,
Or bid me the abandoned way retrace
To His abode.

’Twas mirrored in the purity of dawn,
The glow of day,
The rippling ocean, and the vivid lawn,
Where sunbeams play ;
And in the thunder-shadowed plain no less,
The wild sea-coast, the withering wilderness.
In Nature’s joy and bloom, in her distress
And dark decay.

PENUEL

It seemed to sing if men's approval came
For aught I did ;
Its angry accents reached me in their blame
When rightly chid.
It called thro' Nature's tones, and human lips ;
Its light now shone, now glimmered thro' eclipse
Yet never mid my many falls, and slips,
Was wholly hid.

That Face oft shines upon me from the Book
Wherein is told
The tale of how It wore a vanquished look
To one of old.
A wrestler thro' the night may I, as he,
At Daybreak, when the tearful vapours flee
The Name of blessing and my victory,
Therein behold !

THE BRAMBLE-BUSH

A SIMPLE and accustomed sight,
One day it looked Divine ;
And thrilling to a sudden light
That had begun to shine,
The Moses in me grew unshod
For burning in that bush was God,
Who bade me listen and draw near
Like one who stood on holy ground,

NEW POEMS

Commissioned to tell all around
What he should view and hear.

He made me note the briar first,
And gentle green above ;
The outcome *this* of what He curst,
The token *that* of Love—
The colour rainbowed round the throne,
The pleasing hue whereby is shewn
Most tenderly to mortal eye
Fair Nature's lovely commonplace.
The leaves that shone with gilded grace
Here thorns did fortify.

And blossoms of a delicate mauve
Were out (for it was spring),
Round which gay butterflies did rove
On bright or burnished wing.
Would bloom and insect long adorn
That bush without the guardian thorn ?
And in the fork, below a spray,
A thrush's nest would have been spoiled
Had a collector not been foiled,
By brambles, of his prey.

Then God reminded me that soon
Blackberries would be there,
Sought thro' the warm September moon
By lads and lassies fair ;

THE BRAMBLE-BUSH

And some be plucked (to human woe)
Unripe, if prickles did not grow ;
 While round the others that sharp fence
Would gender skill and zeal and joy
In many a gathering girl and boy,
 Nor foster indolence.

He said the world of varied life
 Was pictured forth in this ;
The briars stood for pain and strife,
 The fruit was hard-won bliss.
The thorny struggle for what Earth
Can give will glorify its worth,
 And waken dormant manliness,
Pain energizing what we feel :
The spice of joy, the spur of zeal,
 Our being can but bless.

Then God—but ah ! the light that shone
 Now faded quite away ;
The Burner in the bush was gone,
 And all was chill and grey.
You think it was a golden gleam
That lit it up and made me dream,
 And woke the thrush's heavenly call ?
Well, if it were, we by His Sun
View in each bush what He hath done,
 And hear His voice in all !

‘ANGELS, UNAWARES.’

THE pure desire that fluttered
And all too quickly fled ;
The thought no language uttered,
That flashed and onward sped ;
The daring hope that shone awhile
To wing its way above ;
The joy with evanescent smile ;
The fair inconstant love.

The day of cloudless glory ;
The hour of perfect gold ;
The moment when a story
From Nature's heart was told ;
When grace unlooked for met the eye
In some accustomed view,
A glancing bird, a rainbow-fly,
A flower of magic hue.

The calm and wise world-ranger
We lightly entertained ;
The heavenly-hearted stranger
Who, pressed to stay, remained ;
The sharer of our common things
For a brief saintly life ;
The little one whose spirit-wings
Soon fled this scene of strife.

‘ANGELS, UNAWARES’

How vivid was their shining,
Transforming our neglect
To wistful half-divining
That won a half-respect !
But not till they had fully flown
Did we discern their worth,
Who, here awhile, have left us lone,
To range a darker earth.

O thought, desire, and feeling !
O moment, day, and hour !
O human founts of healing !
Recall your vanished power !
We lose in the remembered glow
Our folly, grief, and cares—
The hosts, within a tent below,
Of ‘Angels, unawares.’

THE WAITING ONE.

WHILE many ply their utmost strength
To captivate the wistful heart,
One waits in patience till at length
The others quietly depart.

Regard is such an one, content
For the beloved thus to prove
What no reproach or argument
Would teach, the value of true love.

NEW POEMS

Our friend is he who, mid the worst,
Remains at our forsaken side.
How oft the one who charmed us first,
When others fail becomes our bride !

Religion is another such ;
Our childhood's mate, we put her by ;
The hand held out we scorn to touch,
And pass it with averted eye.

But were she not to linger on
In dignity of slighted grace,
The hope of goodness would be gone
That rainbows our beclouded race.

And *Nature* certainly is one ;
Our playfellow in early youth,
Her face in busy life we shun,
Mid commerce, art, and search for truth.

Not yet we answer to her wiles ;
We toil and travail, oft in vain.
Life steals away, anew she smiles,
And we who weep are hers again.

INSECT MINISTRY.

BRIGHT butterfly careering thro'
The summer field on plumes of pleasure !
Tho' sipping, to the common view,
Life's honey at thy will and leisure,

INSECT MINISTRY

Love's labourer thou art, I think,
An angel thro' his heaven flying,
A minister ordained to link
Lone flowers for one another sighing.

Industrious bee, thy music seems
The voice of a perpetual motion,
A wandering Jew's unquiet dreams,
The murmur of unresting ocean !
In very truth, thy history
Is told in tones of calm enjoyment.
The hive, mellifluous mystery,
Absorbs the wealth of thine employment.

Gay languid wasp, thou insect Turk,
Thou vulture round decay oft wheeling !
Is piercing thy perpetual work,
And dost thou only live for stealing ?
Nay ; wounding not, if none displease,
Thou dost but win the wage of duty ;
Thy banquet ended, foul disease
May vanish on the wings of beauty.

Vain youth, if butterflies and bees
And wasps the empty life are scorning,
Art thou to flit with golden ease
From flower to flower in fair adorning ?
Nay, be thine energies now bent
To serve the world, lest Heaven in anger
Curse thee, the only thing content
With aimless and ignoble languor !

ONE FEBRUARY MORNING.

A sudden glimpse of loveliness
In frosty hearts revealed
Enchants me more than the excess
Of what soft natures yield.
And even so, the shy display
Of bloom this February day
Is fairer than the flowers of May
That star a lane or field.

A flood of sunshine from above
Has deluged Earth with gold,
Which gleams as if maternal love
Would mingle young and old—
Love struggling now to reconcile
Two striving seasons for awhile,
For hoary winter seems to smile
On spring, the overbold.

And if a silent nature sing,
The music thrills me more
Than many a melodious thing
That others sang before.
Will spring or winter claim the song
Of that brave thrush, so loud and long?
I would not either season wrong,
Which vaunts that orator.

ONE FEBRUARY MORNING

For oft a winter, moist and green,
My heart has so beguiled
That it in fairyland has been
Where bowers of beauty smiled.
And early spring is oft too chill
For violet or daffodil,
And thrush and lark have ceased the trill
Of winter calm and mild.

Alas! a quarrel soon will end
The sun's apocalypse.
If age and youth refuse to blend
There follows an eclipse.
Cold angry winds and sleety showers
Bid fair to check the peeping flowers,
Now winter lords it, and spring cowers
With unmelodious lips.

LIFE'S FOOLS.

A DWINDLING tale, they come and go, the days
Of joy and gloom,
As rapidly we thread the mortal maze
Toward the tomb.
Monitions stern and tender from the skies
Blend with the earthly all before our eyes,
In ever warning us that it were wise
To front our doom.

NEW POEMS

In vain they whisper that approaching Death
Should bring us nigh
To what this empty toil and fleeting breath
Cannot supply.

In vain they urge us on to labour so,
That something of true worth be left below,
Some legacy of good which, when we go,
Will never die.

Our ears are listless, and our eyes are blind,
To what they tell.

Death's billows gain on triflers who but find
Seaweed and shell,
Gay children tripping down life's golden sand ;
Fond lovers lightly roaming hand in hand,
While waves with herald roar besiege the strand
That none repel.

We grasp the gleaming shadows that appear
Around our way,
Yet vanish quicker than the hurrying year,
The fleeting day.

Vain dilettanti, what will art, and song,
And dance, avail when we our duty wrong ?
The echoes of all music linger long,
But none can stay.

Our giddy hearts, before the schoolbell-sound,
The open gate,
Charmed by the beauty of the scene around,
Long hesitate.

LIFE'S FOOLS

Are we to enter for the precious lore,
Which here alone it may be mortals store?
We play and trifle till they shut the door,
And cry, 'Too late!'

For Death is on us, and of calm and health
We lie bereft.

No toy or gaud escapes, no gain or wealth,
The sweeping theft.

To idle truants who in sunshine bask,
To workmen who will not perform their task,
To paupers robbed of the patrician mask,
Can aught be left?

Fools thus to live when so equipped from birth
For grace and light!

Fools thus to die when we should leave chill earth
Warm thro' our light!

Fools so to squander what has here been lent,
That only this is left us—to repent;
If haply Heaven may at last relent
O'er our sad plight!

THE SOUL'S PRESERVES.

A THOUGHT came home to me to-day
That comforted me much—
Whatever others take away
My best they cannot touch.

NEW POEMS

A world of sense environs me,
Whose sun and moon and star,
And most of what I hear and see
And feel, they may not mar.

A world of memory renews
The glory that is gone ;
'Tis my monopoly to muse
And meditate thereon.

The opulence of many a book
Therein is safely stored ;
No robber hand, or stranger look,
Profane the precious hoard.

With meshes woven from my brain
Is fancy fettered oft :
Alone I set her free again
And bid her soar aloft.

A spiritual world within
Of holy peace and joy,
And triumph over conquered sin
No spoiler can destroy ;

Of rapture that I would not share
For aught with anyone ;
Of incommunicable care,
And trouble guessed by none.

THE LIGHT THAT FAILS

Begone, ye vain disturbers ! Hence
 Whatever would intrude !
For none can overleap the fence
 That rounds my solitude.

THE LIGHT THAT FAILS.

RAINBOWS, ere the cloudy wrath
 Which begat you, ye are gone !
Pink auroras in the North,
Ye were melting while ye shone !
Moors and mountains which the sun
Glorifies with molten gold,
Ere his flaming course be run
He has left you grey and cold !

Opal-tinted fish and shell,
Seaweed, pebble from the deep,
Ocean-born, the shining spell
Native to you, none can keep !
By a foamy wave uptossed
On the uncongenial strand,
Quickly is the splendour lost
That disdains to live on land.

Blossoms on a royal stem,
That inherit glow and grace,
With a fallen diadem
Soon ye lose their every trace !

NEW POEMS

Dying bird and fly, your hues,
As the fires of evening fail :
Dead, your forms their radiance lose
Like a sun-forsaken vale !

Feeling fresh as dew at morn,
Thoughts like linnets on the wing,
Fancies, of delight new-born,
Words like bubbles from a spring !
Sparkling in a virgin birth,
Jetsam from the spirit's main,
Even ye on fallen earth
Living hues cannot retain.

Stars of poetry and song,
Ye have risen but to set :
Gems of Art that blazed for long
In our sky, we now forget.
Creeds, the lightning of your truth,
Leaves the heart ye lit in gloom !
Books whose glow begilt our youth,
Ye forsake us nigh the tomb !

Mortal men, a birth Divine,
Saves you from the common lot !
Freshly come, your spirits shine
Till the glory be forgot.
Tossed upon Time's alien shore,
Ye, while sharing earth's decay,
Win for gleams unkept before,
Light that will not fade away !

PRAYER OF THE MARSH-MALLOWS.

F ORCES that from above
Fertilize field and grove,
Almoners of the love
Circling us round.
Oft mid the summer stress
Freshen our dusty dress
Of lilac loveliness,
On a green ground!

Sun, in whose gracious gold
Blossoming buds unfold,
Thro' the warm day behold
Our quiet growth!
Moon, beneath whose mild beams
Nature all holy seems,
Shine on us when thy gleams
Hallow her sloth!

Stars, that so tenderly,
Ere the day's glory die,
Steal on a pearly sky,
Mauve like our hue,
Glimmer and gently wink
When human lovers link,
Never, before ye sink,
Bid us adieu!

NEW POEMS

Forces of nether birth,
Creatures that haunt the earth,
Sharing man's woe and mirth,
 Toil and repose ;
Cattle, sheep, horse, and ass,
Round our calm petals pass,
Browsing where herb or grass
 Fit for you grows !

Finches of fairy wing,
Pitch on us while ye sing !
All that can beauty bring,
 Blend it with ours !
Gleaming wasps, belted bees,
Throned upon herbs and trees !
Flit for imperial ease
 To purple flowers !

Butterflies that uprear
Painted plumes, settle here,
Or mid a wild career
 Open-winged pause !
Moths in a swift alarm,
Stay your brocaded charm !
Dragon-flies, what can harm
 Here, your bright gauze ?

Lilies around us grouped,
Fitly your heads are drooped,
Aim not, by fancy duped,
 At our degree !

PRAYER OF THE MARSH-MALLOWS

Flowers, let no folded face
Open, for who can trace
In it our pencilled grace,
Our symmetry ?

Force that from heaven descends,
Lives thereby, thither tends,
Yet with all Nature blends,
Spirit of men !

Ye who around us walk,
Noting us while ye talk,
Marking bloom, leaf, and stalk,
Care for us then !

Yearly for you we grow,
Bud, and divinely blow,
Guard us from overthrow,
Wanton or vain !

Lovers who near us stray
Halt on your happy way !
Children our plumage gay
Mark, but refrain !

Let the fair girl and boy
Gather, but not destroy !
Yet to swell human joy
All we would give.

Fresh from the lane or lea,
Mortals, we grace your glee ;
Even we die that ye
Longer may live !

HARVEST-JOY.

'Tis in the laughing sky, the happy field
Of golden grain,
(An autumn glory in abundant yield
From vernal pain)

The hedgerow smiling in calm sympathy,
The tender tint of many a quiet tree,
The watchful lord, the toiling tenantry,
The waiting wain.

They sowed in tears awhile, yon merry crowd ;
What wonder, joy
Is in the flaming heart and accents loud
Of man and boy ?

Grey clouds wept sadly o'er a country-side
Bereft of flowery grace and sylvan pride ;
Red dawns, pale sunsets, damped them as they
plied
Their hard employ.

The dews of effort thro' the wintry round
Stood on their brow
Who guided straight along the soaking ground
The horse and plough :
They trembled greatly for the growing corn,
Mid gales on many a spring and summer morn,
And hence they all, for care so bravely borne,
Are joying now.

HARVEST-JOY

A rapture rises in the reaper's heart,
 The gleaner's, too ;
The children share it, tho' they take no part,
 But come to view.
Freemasonry of happiness hath blent
The throng in glee that finds a common vent ;
And Love, the mighty leveller, hath lent
 His spell anew.

'Tis in the feast that crowns the rural toil,
 When shadows fall,
Where weary sons and daughters of the soil
 Obey the call
To share the farmer's cheer, and sing and dance,
While elders joke, and lads and lasses glance,
With loosened love which finds shy utterance
 Mid mirth of all.

Nor is it only in the landscape fair,
 And breathing balm,
'Tis in the decorated House of Prayer
 Whence hymn and psalm
Arise from many who, the reaping o'er,
Would worship Him to Whom they owe the store,
And then awhile their thankful hearts outpour
 In sacred calm.

NEW POEMS

Alas ! like other joys, it withers soon :
The tale is told
In the sure waning of the harvest moon,
The creeping cold,
The garniture of flowers that fade away
Ere the bright sunset of the holiday,
The ripened fruit that vaunts its prime decay
In ruddy gold.

The harvest merriment will soon give place
To gloom and hush,
No clustering blackberries, no tinted grace,
Will deck one bush ;
The naked hedge, the bleak wind from the East,
Will drive away the memory of the feast ;
Again thro' furrowed fields man, plough, and beast
Their track will push.

Like all delight, it faints and fails, except
The holy one
In hearts who harvest-thanksgiving have kept,
Perhaps begun.
The joy whose germs are planted mid dark fears
And cloudy care, and toil, and gathering tears,
Whose ample harvest comes when Time's sad years
Their course have run.

Be the germs bettering of that within
O'er which we mourn,
Or hearty efforts to remove the sin
Of earth forlorn,

HARVEST-JOY

Each seed, tho' dying first, takes certain root,
And haply while we sigh begins to shoot ;
And even here perchance, precocious fruit
Therefrom is born.

But the full Harvest comes where none shall weep,
For tears are past ;
And all who sow in sorrow here shall reap
A crop at last ;
In happy fields beneath a cloudless Dome,
A Sun that setteth never, shall they roam,
And sing and banquet mid that Harvest-home,
That high Repast.

A SEASIDE SOLILOQUY.

THE night had been tempestuous, and I
Stood pensive on the beach at break of day,
When, on a sudden, sea and shore and sky
Appeared to image in wild interplay
A spirit chafing at the mortal bar,
Beneath a heaven that let
No glimmer reach her of a guiding star,
However she might fret.
Not only did I thereby understand
The fury of that ocean,
But her communion with the strand
In melancholy motion.

NEW POEMS

And thus I mused : Our deep unrest is born
Of grandeur—nay, infinitude beyond !
Not many a ripple even, this wild morn
Has moved the calm of any lake or pond.
Yon billows are upheaved from watery miles

Of a majestic main ;

And so deep down, for all our surface smiles,
Perchance are ache and pain ;

From an eternity beneath, the soul
May rock herself for ever.

If those unquiet depths forbear to roll,
She rests ; without it, never !

And as the heavenly bodies charm the sea,
While earth attracts it also, hence the tides ;

So, courted by two influences, we
In fluctuation take alternate sides.

The spirit yielding to the mastery
Of either, wins repose,

And in subjection to the Power on high
Serene contentment knows.

But better far perpetual unrest
Of tidal rise and falling,

Than the ignoble stillness of the breast
Enslaved of earth's enthralling.

And from without the spirit is disturbed.
The gentle airs that ripple the calm blue
Are soon a hurricane that sweeps uncurbed
To whip a myriad waves of leaden hue :

A SEASIDE SOLILOQUY

So gusts of trouble swell into a gale,
 And doubt becomes despair.
Yet in what bids men quiver, and grow pale
 True being need not share ;
While thro' the night the waves win no release
 From the mad whirlwind's urging,
The centre-deep of ocean is at peace,
 For all the strife and surging.

And to the lonely shore full many a time
Return rejected things of long-ago,
That foam-flecked waves with melancholy chime
Upheave, in storms, or at the tidal flow—
The cargo of a vessel lately lost,
 The sailors newly drowned,
Flotsam and jetsam from the deep uptossed,
 Upon the surface found ;
And what the fretting waves have in their play
 Worn off from rock or shingle,
Will fringe the frothy tide-line miles away
 And with that sea-bord mingle.

And even so will Memory bring back
The all we hope and think is dead and gone.
In pensive mood, against our will, the wrack
Of Life's dark tale we can but muse upon.
Unwelcome bygones on our calm intrude,
 Time's flotsam reappears.
How can the spirit rest whose solitude
 Is peopled from past years?

NEW POEMS

The sunny moments of enchanting May
 We calmly might remember,
But ah ! we fret o'er hours of gloomy grey
 In desolate November.

And yet the tearful sighs and discontent
Subserve in many a one the common good.
From ocean's strife and passionate lament
Is beauty born wherewith the beach is strewed,
The fernery and flora of the sea,
 Pink shells and pebbles bright :
And so from spirit-turmoil, Poesy
 Arises, robed in light.
Mid music of the wistful heart appears
 The bloom of thought and feeling,
Rare gems of fancy from ' the sense of tears '
 Deep mysteries revealing.

But soon the sun had risen, and I saw
His fire reflected on each foamy crest,
Which, when the winds obeying heavenly law,
No longer raved, sank into golden rest.
And watching quiet ocean now aflame,
 As tho' with light Divine,
I sang : ' The Sun of Righteousness can tame,
 And make the spirit shine.
Yon orb of day but bids the surface glow
 And charms the upper madness ;
Our face Divinely sunlit, all below
 Is calm, and glittering gladness.'

THE MASTERS.

I LINK them with the vernal bloom,
That flowered before the rest ;
The herald fly that burst the tomb ;
The early warbling guest ;
The star that first lit up the gloom
Of the uncrimsoned West.

And yet contemporaries scorned
To reckon them the first,
But let them starve and die unmourned,
And ranked them with the worst—
A view the world they had adorned,
Too late, for them, reversed.

The early flower and bird and fly
Come, spite of wintry stress ;
The prophet can but prophesy,
Let hearers curse or bless :
They but fulfilled a destiny
Of gradual loftiness.

With backward gaze, by Nature taught
They in sublime self-trust,
From what God gave them deftly wrought
Song, picture, statue, bust :
The fight of faith was fully fought,
The marching-word was *must*.

NEW POEMS

Content were all, with fame unwon,
To calmly live and die,
To rise and set, a glowing sun,
Ungazed at in the sky ;
Tho' now as then a few or one
Attract the common eye.

And these are viewed as we survey
The rose that withers last ;
One butterfly at fall of day ;
One singer failing fast.
' When they have vanished,' people say,
' The great are in the past.'

Nay, never heed the cuckoo-call !
For many will arise.
Is Nature emptied yet of all
The treasure of the Skies ? '
The truly great are now the small
To dull near-sighted eyes.

IMPERISHABLE.

I WANDERED by the ocean,
Whose music in my youth
Beat time to my emotion
And ever told the truth.
My heart had long been urging
One question, and I said,
' Now tell me thro' thy surging
Is all the Bygone dead ?'

IMPERISHABLE

The tender tale of glory
Told out upon thy shore,
Is it a vanished story
Engulphed for evermore ?
Time's waves have washed the faces
That blent in love, away ;
Its sands retain no traces
Of lingering feet to-day !

A wave the shore forsaking
Then murmured in my ears,
A foamy billow breaking
Shed sympathetic tears.
I noted not, while listening,
The shells it left behind,
And to the rainbow, glistening
Thro' every tear, was blind.

And yet, tho' many a token
Be mused upon, the wave
And breaker have not spoken
The answer that I crave.
The Past hath borne, they tell me,
Bright blessings, but I yearn
To know if they can spell me
A pledge of its return.

But lo ! the wind rejoices
As if it still held fast
The music of those voices,
And pipes a merry blast.

NEW POEMS

The sun, as tho' divining
My doubt, would witness now
To Love's eternal shining
And Truth's immortal vow.

And on the rippling splendour
I seem to view it traced :
' No bygone rude or tender
Can ever be effaced ;
'Tis but as tho' a curtain
Now hid a living tale.'
Oh would I were but certain
That Death will rend the veil !

SABBATH DAYS.

BRIGHT threads of gold in that dark skein
Of life we all unravel !
Oases mid the desert-plain
Poor pilgrims have to travel !
Fixed stars wherein calm Heaven we view
When wearied with earth's motion !
Fair isles of bliss, we land on you
Tossed by the week's wild ocean :

Eternity ennobles Time
When Sabbath-bells are ringing,
And drowns the broken earthly chime
In grand Celestial singing.

SABBATH DAYS

Our matin-prayers we lift at morn
True to the beckoning steeple :
Then haply thread the gilded corn
Like Jesus and His people.

We muse, the dreamy afternoon
Mid earthly glow diminished ;
And roam beneath the heavenly moon,
Our vesper praises finished.
With weather even wet or dull,
A world of calm enjoyment
May charm and cheer us, mid the lull
Of busy life's employment.

Fair Sabbaths, golden as the one
That found Creation ended,
When He whose brightness mocked the sun
To Paradise descended—
The days when God with man still walks
Whom evil doth not harden,
But, meeting him in Nature, talks
Of glory in a garden !

Foul Sabbaths gloomy as the first
That man endured when banished
From Eden to an earth accurst
From which delight had vanished ;
Or, darker still, as that whereon
The world went mad with pleasure
O'er Light, that shone in darkness, gone,
And buried heavenly Treasure !

NEW POEMS

Foul Sabbaths first, then passing fair
And glorious, as the one Day
When silver trumpets thro' the air
And earth, proclaimed it Sunday ;
Mid music from rapt angel lips,
And golden harpers praising
The Risen Sun, whose dark eclipse
Was fallen man's upraising !

I cannot think, fair days of Rest,
That ye most favour mortals.
If Nature's temple be the best
Ye woo them to its portals ;
But they that God in Eden knew
Still ate the fruit forbidden,
And when He would have met their view
Among the trees were hidden.

Nor will I reckon you foul days,
More fit for Sabbath feeling ;
No music then of Nature's praise,
No calm o'er spirit stealing.
If Christ be buried still for men
Why, let the dance and laughter
Be in the fields and lanes, for then
No ache need follow after.

If He be living in their lives,
No matter shine or showers ;
The human honey-bee then hives
The sweet of sacred flowers.

ODE TO THE WIND

The hungry to His temple throng
And rob the blooms together ;
The Glory opens to their song
In bright or cloudy weather.

But give me for my choice the day,
Tho' fair, with foul beginning !
For what more fitly could portray
The grace that met our sinning ?
The ' Lord's Day,' be it brighter than
Creation's closing story :
On that, God walked with falling man ;
On this, Man rose to Glory !

ODE TO THE WIND.

WHIRL from the northern pole
All thy rude worth !
Let the leaves onward roll
Mad with thy mirth !
Tho' the sky rave and weep,
And the world vigil keep,
Soon shall thy besom sweep
Death from the earth.

Ere thou shalt cease to blow
Nature will rise,
Mantled in spotless snow,
Under blue skies,

NEW POEMS

While the world witnesseth
To a pure life in death,
Hope, on thy savage breath,
 Winged in disguise.

Steal from the balmy south !
 Trembling with lays,
As it were Nature's mouth
 Murmuring praise.
Let the soft charm remain,
Even tho' tears of rain
And gentle sighs complain
 Of the dark days.

Soon shall the forest yield
 Green for thy spell ;
Cowslips shall deck the field,
 Daisies the dell.
Sunbeam and rainbow bright,
Insects in tuneful flight,
Thrushes in mad delight,
 May shall foretell.

Blow from the bitter east,
 Be it thou must,
Burying, Nature's priest,
 All in the dust,
When with thy manifold
Tortures and ills untold
Thou hast racked young and old,
 Weak and robust.

ODE TO THE WIND

Sweep along Earth's sad vale
 Blighted and curst ;
Rain and sleet, snow and hail,
 Bring at their worst !
Better to work and freeze
Than to recline at ease !
Foliage, flowers, and trees
 Too soon may burst.

Wing from the gentle west
 All the sweet store
Of the plain brightly dressed
 Thou creepest o'er ;
Perfume of gorse and may,
Clover pink, new-mown hay,
Spoil from the carpet gay
 On the field-floor.

Charm from the weary ear
 Accents of wrong ;
Waft from the meadows near
 Music and song,
Where maiden, man and boy,
Reapers in hot employ,
Pause to let harvest-joy
 Echo for long !

Blow from each pole in turn,
 Circle the world,
Bid all one flag discern,
 Freedom's unfurled !

NEW POEMS

Bonds from the true and free
Ever are flung to thee ;
Mine to thy liberty
Now shall be hurled !

MOMENTS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Not always before noon
Is the sun free from mist and showery cloud :
'Tis oft late evening ere the curtained moon
Beams thro' her shroud.

Yet moments come to all
Before ripe age, in middle life and youth,
When haloes melt away and vapours fall
From shadowed Truth.

The painted screen is reft
From off the panorama of our life,
The glare and glitter goes, and nought is left
But care and strife.

The veil is then unfurled
That mantles the deceit wherein we live,
And we expect no more from the false world
Than she can give.

The gilded curtain drops
From riches, rank, or accident of birth,
And nothing in the wearer counts or stops
But moral worth.

MOMENTS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The web of man's design
Inwoven now with righteousness and love,
Unfolding shows a symmetry Divine
Planned from Above.

The cloak of sophistry
That covers Good and Evil falls away,
And makes them differ to the steady eye
As night from day.

The vile commercial mask
That now conceals transfigured Wrong and Right
Is gone, and their true nature none need ask
Who views the sight.

Away from Love and Hate
In human guise, the garb of goodness rolls,
And both appear removed in their true state
Far as the Poles.

THE CONSECRATED CLOUD.

'A cloud received Him out of their sight.'

O^N tinted clouds I love to muse
As on a picture fair,
That borrows fascinating hues
From Thy concealment there.
A hidden Sun once made them shine,
And now they ever look Divine ;

NEW POEMS

As the green earth Thy footsteps trod
A consecrating Touch retains ;
As the wild ocean still remains
Hushed by the Word of God.

All praise to Thee for having hid
Thy Glory from our eyes,
That so we never can be chid
For doubting Thou didst rise ;
But may their benison receive
Who ' have not seen, and yet ' believe
A well-attested history ;
Their sin-restraining awe who view
While here but ' figures of the True '
And feed on mystery !

All praise for having thus concealed
Thy glorious Abode !
The Goal continues unrevealed
That curtain round the Road.
Is Heaven a central Sun, a Star
Outblazing planets near and far,
Or but a radiant State of rest ?
No telescope can pierce the shroud ;
A voice reminds us from that cloud
That patient doubt is best.

Our dreams of It are but as those
That charm the pensive heart
Of one who at a day's fair close
Can watch the sun depart

THE CONSECRATED CLOUD

To climes whereof he is not told,
Save that the crimson blue and gold
Wake fancies he would not dispel.
The sheath of Right is an ideal ;
Undue disclosure of the Real
Might lead to wrong and hell.

A cloud, formed partly from above
And partly from below,
Consorted with the heavenly love
That bade Him share our woe.
The right receptacle was it
For One Divinely-human, fit
Far more for Heaven than misty earth :
A proper chariot for Him
Who rode to glory from the dim
Sad vale of human birth :

A pledge of vapours drawn aloft
To quickly fall again,
Bereft of harmfulness, in soft
And fertilizing rain :
A sign of prayers, upborn on high
To win their answer from the sky
Thro' One enthroned within the veil,
Who even while His Form recedes
With holy hands uplifted, pleads
The merits that prevail.

NEW POEMS

A habitation fit for One
Who promised to outpour
The gift His sacrifice had won
On men for evermore.
The Glory-cloud that hid His Form
Begot no wild or angry storm,
But on devoted spirits shed
That outcome of His Cross of shame,
The mighty wind and forks of flame
That played on every head.

And now o'ershadowed, oft I ask
What those disciples felt ;
Methinks they hoped the cruel mask
That veiled their Lord might melt.
And yet the Sun of Righteousness
Was hidden from their view to bless
With golden shaft and arrowy glance.
The Orb of Light would blind the gaze
Uncurtained, but thro' gentle haze
Is softly seen perchance.

And where the darkness looks too great
For sunny beams to pierce,
When trouble that will not abate
Is furious and fierce,
I recollect one mystic sight,
That Rainbow round the Throne of Light,

THE CONSECRATED CLOUD

Whose origin I love to trace
To what the cloud that hid the Lord
In Pentecostal might outpoured
From the Abode of grace.

That token of a tempest gone
Which so refreshed mankind
Tells me the clouds we look upon
As dark are brightly lined.
The gale at worst will do no harm,
At best it hath a potent charm
To fertilize the heart and soul.
My gloom is rainbowed by the thought
This sign of deathless Hope hath brought,
That smiles shall conquer sighs.

When round my soul dark doubts are massed
Like vapours undispeled,
It comforts me that Christ was last
Beneath a cloud beheld,
That by its help He won the Life
Of perfect Glory which no strife
Nor mortal misery can leaven :
Thus even Doubt devoid of rift,
Unspanned by rainbow, may uplift
The clouded soul to Heaven.

CATHOLICITY.

You want to know my favourite bard,
Musician, artist, preacher, too?
To tell you that would be as hard
As singling out a sunset hue.

As well inquire of me the bird,
Of all the migratory host
In the May wood or meadow heard,
Whose haunting music thrills me most.

The dying crimson of the West
Wakes poetry in peeping stars ;
Yet none is purer than the rest
And Venus cannot vie with Mars.

The flowers in lane and meadow preach
Of beauty, truth, and righteousness.
But yielding to the charm of each
Is not to love the others less.

Nor could I choose or classify
As major, minor, great and small ;
No special favourite have I,
They please and teach me, one and all.

TO-MORROW.

STILL-BORN babe of Father Time,
Dead the moment of thy birth !
As we die into a Clime
To the fore of cradling earth,
So thou hast a name to live
When thine own hath passed away :
We belaud thee if we give
Praise in honour of 'To-day.'

Viewing thee before the change,
Full of hope and full of fear,
Is thy falsity more strange
Than our whole experience here ?
Expectation unfulfilled,
Vain forebodings soon forgot,
Genial winters, summers chilled,
Cloud and glorify our lot.

Thou art truer than the things
That but ravish to depart
On irrevocable wings
From a disenchanted heart—
Sunset hues, far-echoing bells,
Music at the twilight hour,
Tints on newly-stranded shells,
Perfume from a fragile flower.

NEW POEMS

None of them can realize
Any hope their spell awakes ;
Thou wilt promise in fair skies,
And perform when daylight breaks !
Nay, at even oft we weep
Over what at dawn looks bright ;
Reaching by the bridge of sleep
Morning joy from gloom at night.

Smooth magician, limbo vast,
Into which the debt of vow,
Duty, and resolve, is cast,
What a conjurer wert thou,
With the changing of thy name
Robbing men of will and strength,
When to-day's ' at once ' became
A to-morrow's calm ' at length ' !

A NIGHT-VISION.

I NEVER roamed such fields of light
As in a dream of joy,
When one appeared in raiment bright
Who loved me when a boy.
I never in that bygone bliss
Was thrilled by a diviner kiss
Or circled by a softer arm !
Wise men of Babylon, can ye

A NIGHT-VISION

Interpret that fair dream to me,
By omen, spell, or charm?

Ye augurs from the past who hold
That all from memory leapt,
The glory of a tryst of old
Imperishably kept !
Come tell me why the interview
Itself appeared not half so true !
The shadow should be fainter than
The substance, yet that was not so ;
The cause thereof ye do not know
However wise your clan !

Ye prophets who, from what I saw
In that enchanting time,
An oracle of hope would draw
For a far future clime !
Explain to me how an ideal,
If that were such, could be so real,
How one to come, with such a spell
Bewitched my heart that I in tears
Awoke bewildered. Ah ! vain seers
The reason none can tell !

Should I discern the truth, no thanks
To you who thus can err !
Is there a Daniel in your ranks,
A wise interpreter?

NEW POEMS

If there be any, hear my oath,
That one I will in scarlet clothe,
And deck him with a golden chain ;
Third ruler in my kingdom, he
Shall throne it next my love and me
In fancies that I feign !

Nay, nay, from none I hear the truth,
But from a Power above—
The very charmer of my youth,
In fact, renewed her love !
This only know I not—if I
Attracted her from the far sky,
Or flew from earth to meet her there ;
But blending thus in that fond dream,
What wonder that the fields should seem
So gloriously fair ?

REJUVENESCENCE.

OFT have I seen a lovely smile
Light up the aged face
Of one who for a little while
Renews a former grace,
To triumph over deepening gloom
Around the pathway to the tomb,
As if in Heaven's embrace,
Who bade her blossom into love
And warble of delight above.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

And so on a December day,
The year that lingers still
Oft charms us by a sunny ray,
A thrush's happy trill ;
And primroses and violets
Peep out to find if she forgets
That wintry air is chill ;
When, answered by a zephyr's kiss,
They bloom in almost April bliss.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

THE cluster ripe and golden
That overhangs the rest ;
The single joy withholden
That ever looks the best ;
The place that Fortune sets above
Our vaulting power to win ;
The one wherewith to blend in love
Were treachery or sin.

The haunt at school or college
Beyond the lawful bound ;
The fascinating knowledge
In some vile volume found.
How is it that permitted things
Their wealth and worth have hid
In favour of the charm that clings
To what the Fates forbid ?

NEW POEMS

'Tis but the ancient story
Of hungry human eyes
Averted from the glory
And joy of Paradise,
The flowers that blew, the birds that sung,
The toil, and ease, and glee,
To banquet on the fruit that hung
From an excepted tree.

We leave the happy highway
To honour, peace, and health,
And saunter down a by-way
To soul-destroying wealth.
We front the ' Notice ' to avoid
A spot by hurrying thence ;
We vow the risk shall be enjoyed
And vault the warning fence !

The very kine that wander
Avoid the poison-herb !
The bitter berries yonder
No starling will disturb :
We heavenly warblers feel when trees
Are evil, branch and root ;
Yet furl our wings in wanton ease,
To pluck forbidden fruit !

INSPIRATION.

THE spark Divine to fire a train
Of fancy is not quick to fall ;
To win it effort is in vain,
Nor doth it answer to our call.

Descending rarely at our will,
Without it and against it oft,
We feel the fire no art or skill
Has ever conjured from aloft.

Like Balaam, urged to prophesy
By hope of honour, gold, or fame,
The multitude may charm our eye,
Yet not attract the heavenly flame.

We shift our point of view, but no,
The vision palsies brain and heart ;
The rapture will not rise, the glow
Keeps off, until the host depart.

Then one comes tripping in perchance,
And all our being is on fire :
A smile, a blush, a timid glance,
And music wakens with desire !

A true conductor has the power
To draw down lightning from above ;
So flashes, mid that stormy hour,
Illumine us, invoked by love.

NEW POEMS

This oft to me has Nature done :
Her golden gleams and dancing fields,
And waves and wings, coquette with one
Who lightly to the magic yields.

Alone with her a calm is mine
Wherein to dream of human things ;
When lo! the falling spark Divine,
And Fancy soars on fiery wings.

LITTLE PETER.

THE reason why they called him so,
I dare to fancy was the same
That moved the Master to bestow
On one of old the name.
The sponsors knew it not, but we
Perform His will unconsciously ;
He called the child so, He alone
Who turns our native dust to stone.

The babe, like everyone at birth,
Began with but a puny soul,
Corruptible and dark as earth,
Devoid of self-control.
Apt to be blown like dust away,
It grew coherent as the clay ;
And like a stone, compact and strong,
A character will come ere long.

LITTLE PETER

You ask me how? Ah! that I tell
By simply bidding you be wise,
And study Nature's parable
Told out before your eyes.
The elements have power to mould ;
Young clay is petrified when old :
The white and hardening work is done
Thro' earth's uplooking at the sun.
Thus ghostly rain and dew and wind
In time will shape and temper each
Whose open heart and ready mind
Repose within their reach.
If stronger thro' life's storm and stress
We face the Sun of Righteousness,
The Spirit of the Living God
Can make a Cephas of a sod.
The Saviour when He called His Saint
At first, foreknew that he would be
A fellow-worker prone to faint,
Yet true to destiny ;
The firmer for inconstant years,
The holier for bitter tears ;
For ever after on the side
Of Him the faithful, thrice-denied.
And does not He who measures man
Know truly whither all will tend,
Where they who at the Font began
Shall fall, how each will end ?

NEW POEMS

He marked this little one, I think,
Walk life's wild sea, and then half sink,
A stormy-petrel of the waves
Whom Jesus bears with, proves, and saves.

And Christ, in His Apostle, viewed
What ultimately would be made
A mystic stone of magnitude,
A firm Foundation laid :
Himself the Corner, of the rest
This, hewn and polished, was the best ;
While, for the superstructure, we
Are fitted in fair symmetry.

And in that Temple of renown
There surely waits a special place
For little Peter, polished down,
And fashioned into grace.
Let this in pain and trial soothe,
That woe will cleanse and trouble smoothe.
Life's friction done, he, white and trim,
Will fit the space reserved for him !

UNWEDDED.

SHE did not marry, and I dared,
Tho' silently, to question why—
Did none approach for whom she cared?
Did one dear lover die?

UNWEDDED

That she, so gentle, kind, devout,
And fair, had many, who can doubt?
So true a spirit none would grieve,
Nor could she, on her part, deceive.

Did she refuse to quit the side
Of some who needed her at home,
The aged ones from whom, a bride,

She would have had to roam?

Or rather than become a wife
Did she prefer the single life,
To train her mind, and use some gift
The world to profit or uplift?

Or maybe a presentiment,
Which she alone could brood upon,
Convinced her that she was not meant

To hand her being on,
Since any born of her would wear
A weakness, or a burden bear,
Or haply some more sacred thing
Has hindered her from marrying.

If not, she erred—a fairy tree
Looks lovelier with saplings round;
It fails in grace and symmetry

Where barren limbs are found.
Some blossoms of Humanity
Flower merely from the marriage-tie
And fruit there is that only grows
Where love parental overflows.

NEW POEMS

The greatest Powers have one ally
Whereon they lean in martial stress :
A country with no colony
 Would rue her barrenness ;
And Nature, who hath plainly shewn
We are not formed to live alone,
Will reckon with a rebel, born
For love, yet wilfully forlorn.

A SUNSET LYRIC.

THE Light from an Infinite Past
 Whose fountain no mortal can trace
Is flashed in the glow that is cast
 By the day's dying flame on thy face.
The breezes that blow on thy brow
 O'er the waves from the crimsoning west
Seem to wing from the Then, and the Now,
 And the Future, Eternity's best.
A Glory that shone ere thy birth,
 Whose splendour returns after death,
Now veiled by the shadow of Earth,
 Awakes for awhile at their breath.
They waft the sweet tones of a Chime
 That is ringing the music of life,
They whisper, methinks, of a clime
 Where repose is the crown of our strife.

A LITERARY SAMSON.

‘ **H**is strength is in his hair,’ they say ;
‘ He apes the seers who wear it long :
Shorn of the fraudulent display
None would esteem him wise or strong.’
Peace! vile Philistines, in whose eyes
True genius is a sore offence,
Who hold no commune with the skies,
And reckon all by rule of sense.

The Orb of light a glory streams
Wherein all open eyes can share,
And say we not who love its beams
That strength lies in that golden hair?
Why, ‘ Samson ’ means ‘ a little sun,’
And all begilt from his bright rays
Will ere his lettered race be run
Award his splendour hearty praise.

His power is consecrate to God,
Who thereby lightens Israel.
His thought and fancy are a rod
Divine, unlettered foes to quell.
From birth he has abjured the drink
That Fashion mingles for the fool,
And pastured with the minds that think
And learn and strive in Wisdom’s school.

NEW POEMS

He rent a lion of the Press,
Whose carcase bred a swarm of bees,
That would have stung him, had success
Not made them yield him honeyed ease.
He, from 'the jawbone of an ass'
Drew water for his spirit-thirst,
Then, armed with it against a mass
Of vile opponents slew the worst.
Philistine critics round him lurk
To end his intellectual life,
To kill his fame, and mar his work,
Thro' ambushed guile or open strife.
In many a Gaza of the pen
Has he ere now been safely kept,
His foes reviling him : what then?
He flung them back disdain—and slept !
And rising up refreshed, he took
Their vaunted bars away at will,
And bearing them, in some new book
Strode up the literary hill.
And yet a danger I foresee,
That tho' on high, and far above,
Both foes and friends, that even he
Will seek the vale, and fall in love.
Delilah dancing he will woo ;
And she will win her way I fear.
Philistine to the core, her crew
Of worthies will be ambushed near.

A LITERARY SAMSON

Her charms will flatter him to sleep,
And tho' from time to time he rise
To snap the snare, the witch will weep,
And then more surely hypnotize.
And Samson will wake up at length
Like those around him, neat and shorn,
To feel that all his mental strength
Has vanished with the locks long worn.
Society will clip his wings,
And put out both his eyes, till blind,
A prisoner to common things,
In Fashion's mill he has to grind.
But oft at sunset while we gaze,
The Orb of Day ere lost to sight
Flames forth into a parting blaze,
To leave the legacy of Night :
So haply ere he quits the world
Of Letters darker for his death,
Will vengeance on his foes be hurled,
And ruin quench their bitter breath.
A final book from him may bring
The Temple of their Dagon down,
And lords and ladies languishing
May prove it his life-labour's crown.
Philistinism he may crush,
The moment that he darkly dies,
And Israel may mid the hush
Of folly rank him with the wise !

COMPARATIVE GRANDEUR.

WHEN wearied with the littleness of Earth,
The human-babble, and the creature-strife,
I turn to Grandeur born before our birth,
And living on when we have done with life :
The Grandeur that we rightly term Divine,
Wrought and upheld by no apparent might ;
Thro' which a Love, and Truth, and Wisdom shine
That gild our darkness with unearthly light :
The Grandeur which, tho' men may fret and rage,
They cannot vary, and will not abate—
Which hardly helps them in the war they wage
So fruitlessly with Time, and Death, and Fate :
The Grandeur of the simple form and hue
Of insect, bird, and flower, that never change ;
The rainbow-radiance old, but ever new,
The sunset-tints, accustomed, yet so strange :
The Grandeur of the Sun, and Moon, and Stars,
Serenely contemplating all below,
Yet calmly callous to the wrong that mars
Our life, the care of each, the pain, the woe.
The Grandeur of gilt Ocean, blue or grey,
The noon-day gleam, the phosphorescent flash,
The hurricane in its wild roundelay,
The vivid lightning, and the thunder-crash.

COMPARATIVE GRANDEUR

Yet in full vision of their majesty
The thought has come (inspired by them, who
knows?)

However long they live, at last they die ;
This Drama will, for all its Grandeur, close.

We think them very great while we are small,
They, Spirit-born, we fashioned from the dust,
Forgetting we shall live to watch their fall,
And that we never perish, while they must.

Far better than the best he may behold
Is Man, imperial heir of all he views.
His tale of earthly life alone is told ;
None tell what in Eternity ensues,

Except that weal is ever to the good,
And to the wicked woe : and sure of this,
I feel the dignity of all the food
Whereon the spirit feeds to gender bliss.

The views of Nature, who can overlaud
Their value, when beheld with that intent?
The Wisdom, Truth, and Love, we well applaud
If their display be our soul-nutrimment.

Yet would I turn when tired of earthly things,
And views, to Grandeur of a loftier type—
Enduring means whereby the spirit-wings
Gain power and poise, the heart and mind grow
ripe.

NEW POEMS

The Grandeur of the heavenly Day of Rest,
With Time coeval, and to last as long,
Wherein the bad grow good, the better, best,
Health springs from weariness, and right from
wrong.

The Grandeur of the Writings bound by Time,
And wise selection, into one great Book,
Whose Law and Lore with those of Nature chime,
Whose wealth and worth are hid from none who
look.

The Grandeur of the Church whose Rocky Base
Outweathers stormy Time, whose living stones
Are quarried, hewn, and polished for their place,
By Him Who all in Earth and Heaven owns.

These claim and win the utmost of my power
Of sense and spirit, for in sight of them
Earth's Grandeur wanes, and in my truest hour
The greatest she can offer I condemn.

THE TEMPTING THREE.

AMONG the merry masquers, I was told
There would be three,
Disguised as beauties, but deformed and old,
Whom none can flee.

THE TEMPTING THREE

Coquetting distantly with smile and glance,
In charming coyness they would soon advance,
Nor could I be excused the proffered dance
On any plea.

'Twas even so—one beckoned, and ere long
We were entwined :
And thro' the maze, and past the glittering throng
We madly whirled.
But ah ! I rued the dizzy fellowship.
Wrecked by her robe whose magic made me trip,
I heard the words escape a cruel lip,
I am 'The World.'

Another wove around me from the fall
A silken mesh.
She bade me in the gilded banquet-hall
My heart refresh,
Her breath was like the languid summer breeze ;
And while she sought my every sense to please,
I whispered to her, lapped in balmy ease,
Thou art 'The Flesh.'

And when I rose, as if to bid adieu
To dance and revel,
A third approached, who charmed me to a new
And lower level.
She had been watching, saw me wheel about,
And knew I wearied now of waltz and rout,
So murmured softly, ' Shall we sit it out ?'
She was 'The Devil.'

THE CHARITY BAZAAR.

H o! enter ye who have the cause at heart
Of heavenly Love,
Nor need the haters hitherto, depart
And further rove!
No entrance-fee is asked for ; the one price
Is audience of fair angels for advice ;
Seven lovely ladies who would fain entice
From Earth, Above.

Behold them robed in garments that befit
The things they teach,
And ready with the special benefit
Required by each !
Pause at the various stalls! no need for haste :
The golden moments here none ever waste
Who even banquet on their charms and taste
Their wholesome speech.

/ Bright Honour beckons to you—let her first
Unfold her store.
If you but take one trifle, you will thirst
For many more.
All hearts without her, Charity neglect,
For who can love devoid of self-respect?
Dishonoured ones Society infect
From their vile sore.

THE CHARITY BAZAAR

- 2 Humility now eyes you, mild and meek
As any nun.
Her modest treasure you must early seek,
Love's course begun,
He who would realize affection's dream
Must 'others better than himself' esteem
Can any former disregard redeem,
That grace unwon?
- 3 Calm Self-denial calls you to come near,
With wistful eye.
- 4 Kind Pity too, Love's gentle pioneer,
Pass them not by!
The will for others' failure to atone,
The power to set a brother on the throne,
The Charity that 'seeketh not her own,'
Let them supply!
- 5 Approach the Twins, fair Constancy and Truth,
Who court you now!
Ripe Age's grandeur and the charm of Youth
Blend on their brow.
Attachment grows on none who slight the call
To don a comely mantle from their stall.
Who wear the clinging habit never fall
From Love's one vow.
- How can you turn from gentle Faith who asks
Your patronage?
Like the Twins' countenance, her vesture masks
Both Youth and Age.

NEW POEMS

Young as the truthful child, yet old as Earth,
Without her, Love would not outlinger birth ;
With look of far-away, she bids her worth

Your heart engage.

‘ I have no purchase-money here,’ you say,
‘ And must rebel.’

You have—the veriest pauper now could pay
For what they sell.

The price of all is but to cast aside
The opposite of what they each provide ;
And leaving Love’s rich Fancy-fair, decide
For Heaven, not Hell.

OFF SHE GOES!

HEARTIES of land and sea,
Tune your pipes merrily
For many a cheer!

Now from each loyal lip
One for the gallant Ship,
Bound for an ocean-trip,
Leaving the pier!

One for the Captain wise,
Scorning the cloudy skies,
Firm at his post!

One for the Sailors brave,
Fearing no foamy wave,
Steady tho’ whirlwinds rave
Round the wild coast!

OFF SHE GOES

One for the Sweethearts sad !
Bid their dim eyes be glad
 With your best breath !
One, and the loudest, too,
For every Boy in blue
To King and country true
 In life or death !

SHANKLIN REVISITED

BACK in the island of beauty,
 After the tempest of years,
Weathered in hope that mid duty
 Sunshine would triumph o'er tears.
Back, to find Nature unaltered,
 Yet by Man's humour so changed
That my sure footsteps have faltered
 Oft as I ranged.

Back, to find villa and hostel
 Desecrate meadow and grove,
Booths where the multitude jostle
 Built on old arbours of love.
Yet with it all the green story
 Of the immutable Chine
Told thro' millenniums of glory
 Grandly divine.

NEW POEMS

Back, now alone, to recapture
All that I can from the spell
Of a bright season of rapture
Felt to the full in that dell.
Back, to bid memory ponder
Every fair meadow and glade,
Where, when it pleased us to wander,
Lightly we strayed.

Where, mid the shadows on sunlight
Golden as never before,
Love made us whisper that one light
Could not be canopied o'er—
Light that had dawned at our meeting,
Love that then drew living breath,
Love-light the darkness defeating,
Stronger than death.

Where, when we wearied of motion
Over a landscape of bliss,
Resting, we heard the blue ocean
Greet the red rock with a kiss—
Where, with new energy roaming
Round the green fields of delight,
Oft would we sit till the gloaming
Melted in night.

Oft, when the magic of moonbeams
Haunted the track that they made,
Vowing anew that tho' soon beams
Vanish, our path should not fade ;

SHANKLIN REVISITED

Life's silver sea-way would shimmer
Brightly for lovers so fond ;
Round the horizon would glimmer
Heaven beyond.

Back, to the hours of our scheming
For a to-morrow's employ,
That might replenish our dreaming
With the fulfilment of joy.

Back, to the scenes of our planning
For the fair future of life,
Rainbows of laughter oft spanning
Clouds of gay strife.

Back, to recall the illusion
Halo-like circling the Truth,
While each enchanting delusion
Curtained the prescience of youth.

Back, to bethink me with sadness
Nothing can wax, but to wane.

Back, to remember with gladness
Much can remain !

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO NATURE

I OPENED it and read therein
The Tale of guilt and grace ;
For penitence, and pardoned sin,
And Love, shone thro' her face.

NEW POEMS

A summer tempest brought to mind
The wrong that I had done.
I knew it thro' the wailing wind,
The sad and watery sun.

The thunder-cloud that veiled the plain,
The flash that woke my fears,
The deluge of descending rain,
Told me my due was tears.

And when I wept, and prayed, and vowed
His tribute who repents,
A lovely rainbow spanned the cloud,
The sign that Heaven relents.

New power and longing to do well
Proved evil's fetter riven,
While every blackbird in the dell
Sang, golden-lipped, 'Forgiven!'

The sun blazed out, and wild with joy,
The creature-crowd began
To shew, by structure and employ,
Community with man.

His form, the form of common things,
Of trees and flowers that toss
Their arms and heads, of open wings,
All witness to 'The Cross.'

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO NATURE

I watched how weakness yields to might,
And innocence to guilt,
And comprehended, thro' the sight,
Atoning Blood once spilt.

Yet mid the internecine strife
Were hints of conquered death
That made me doubt the end of life
In aught that fails of breath.

Whether or not the wistful hope
Despondency forbade,
Death-shadowed Nature would not mope,
Doomed creatures were not sad.

No note of discord marred the mirth
Below, around, above.
The music of an echoing Earth
Proclaimed that 'God is Love.'

A PÆAN TO LOVE

PAINT me the Sun as he rises
Rich in the promise of Day,
Tinting the East with surprises
Roseate, golden, and grey.

NEW POEMS

Yet is my picture the finer—
Beauty below and above,
Blending in fashion diviner—
Fairy first-love.

Tell me the tale of a noontide
Blazing from beams that shone thro'
Tempests of fury that soon died
Into a shadowless blue.
Yet can I tell of far stronger
Whirlwinds that Love hath dispersed—
Lightning and tears lasting longer ;
Wrath at the worst.

Play me sad music o'er twilight
Chill from a vanishing sun—
Cheered by a planet whose shy light
Peeps ere the crimson be done.
Then let me sing, while you listen,
Praise to a Love that remains,
Needing no friendship to glisten
After it wanes.

Hail to thee, Love, at all ages,
Sun of Life's East, North, and West,
Glow of our day thro' its stages,
Shine at our evening the best !
Be it our twilight is clouded,
Flame thro' the shadows that fall !
Burn when the loved one is shrouded
Brightest of all !

TO AN OLD BACHELOR

THE setting sun that hallows all
With golden calm and tender grace,
Has let a faint reflection fall

On thine averted face.

The joy and glory are withdrawn
That graced it in thy being's dawn,
Because thy love, the sun of life,
Was for thyself, and not a wife.

Thy world revolved around an orb
That has it not to squander gold,
The self whose aim was to absorb
And which, now waxing old,
Is joyless, solitary, strange,
With care and hope of narrow range ;
Untutored in the happiness
Of those who spend their all to bless.

Thine outlook in the flush of youth
Was that which faces every man
Confronted with the claim of Truth,
Since human life began ;
The choice from many a maiden who
Holds love and marriage as her due,
Yet veiled by Nature's modest mask
Would sooner die than court or ask.

NEW POEMS

Unwed and childless, could they find
What women seek, the full supply
Of that which form and heart and mind
Demand, tho' silently?

Did He, Who knew how best we live,
To man in Eden woman give,
For any to disdain the gift
Designed to comfort and uplift?

And this, while there are fewer men
Than mating women, so that they
Are doubly despicable when

They woo and fly away—
Mere butterflies who bid a flower
Enchant them for a sunny hour ;
Gay bees who leave the clover sweet
For some more fascinating treat.

And thou couldst trifle thus in talk,
Song, laughter, and responsive glance,
Mid summer ride and moonlit walk,

Or garden-game and dance !
One should have been thine own by right,
But ah ! for duty and delight,
When thou couldst calmly make the choice
That made thyself alone rejoice.

The old soliloquy was thine,
Their reverie who only think
Of self, and slighting the Divine,
Shun this most human link.

TO AN OLD BACHELOR

‘ With her, my freedom I forego
For lessened wealth and likely woe !
Can love for worldly loss atone ?
Adieu, adieu ! I live alone !’

And was it all the time forgot,
That that apology for bliss,
The comfort of a single lot

Hath its own Nemesis ?

Who now approaches—Night is near,
And harmony that ought to cheer
The shadowed highway to the tomb,
Is absent from thy pensive gloom.

At sunset every wedded thing
Flies back, and when each happy bird
Rejoins its mate, from all that sing

Sweet melody is heard ;

Do arms of welcome circle thee,
Returning home, in tender glee ?
No lively girl, or laughing boy,
Will ever thrill thy heart with joy.

That heart has grown too dry for tears,
Or it might freshen thee to weep.

Tell out thy tale of empty years,

And lay thee down to sleep !

Thy phantasies, if then thou dream,
Will centre in a single theme,
No loving wife, no fairy elf,
But thy poor withered lonely self !

NEW POEMS

A THREEFOLD VOLUNTARY

Joy! tho' thine haunt be the sunlight,
Fityly we feign thee a-wing,
Sportive alone in that one light,
Buoyant while Nature doth sing.
If but a cloud shadow gladness
Closely thy pinions are furled ;
Spreading to flutter in sadness
Out of the world.

Hope! the calm moonlight befits thee,
Pledge of a sun that will rise
Soon as fruition admits thee
To the full wealth of the skies.
Darkness I figure thee scorning,
Bright-eyed with moon-silvered hair ;
They who can wait for the morning
Mock at despair.

Truth! thou dost gleam as the starlight
Tempered to all who up-gaze,
Token, mid dusk, of a far light
Veiling ineffable rays.
Watching lest error betide me,
Argus-eyed as the pure Dome,
Let thy clear glimmering guide me,
Truant from Home!

SONNETS.

AN INTELLECTUAL OCTOBER

GREY mornings in the autumn of a mind,
When mists enwrap the many-tinted trees
Whose ripened fruit, if manifest, might please
And nourish the clear-visioned of mankind
(Or haply open eyes that else were blind),
But which, unless the clinging vapour flees
Before a genial sun and creeping breeze,
Poor hungry sightless wanderers may not find.
Reveal the hidden plenty, sun of Truth !
Blow blessed wind, and clear the mists away !
Ye who in hoary age, or eager youth,
Are craving wholesome food, or fuller light,
Ingather all, before the mind decay,
And see distinctly ere the fall of night !

A DIVINE ANALOGY

TRUTH has attempered to our mortal eyes
The Plan that Nature opens out to view.
It looks to us but is not wholly true,
And may be would not charm us otherwise.
Sense adds her quota, and the Soul supplies
A needful part, to substance, form, and hue :
Illusion enters by each avenue
In garb of Truth's poetical disguise.
The God of Nature told the Christian Theme
Inweaving human legend and romance,
A lovely mask for Heavenly utterance,
Or awful Fact He might not else relate.
Let none diminish or disintegrate
The Envelope and Fabric of His Scheme !

NEW POEMS

DISESTABLISHMENT

MANY there are without, who would dethrone
And spoil our ancient Church, and some within.
Of these, the one, equality would win ;
The other, freedom, hoping thus alone
To gain full play for what the rest disown.
Ah ! for the State, with Church no longer twin ;
Exit the Faith ! and enter soon, with sin,
The woe of ' him who falleth when alone ' !
Two aged Parents, would ye rob them both ?
Your Mother-Church deprived of honour, dress,
And wealth, before a People that lay stress
On gold and circumstance, will hardly stand :
While, if Religion fail your Fatherland,
A righteous God will fail not of His Oath !

LIFE IN VIEW OF OCEAN

' I would not live beside the sea,' you say,
' For on one hemisphere I could not walk.
Cut off by shingle, limestone, granite, chalk,
That fence an outlook I can but survey,
My limbs are half defrauded of due play.
Unwinged, no gull, tern, guillemot, or auk,
I feel a rebel mid the common talk
Of Ocean's grand and various display.'
Yet well for man who nears Eternity
And cannot always look up at the sky
To gaze upon marine Infinitude !
The light that round the dim horizon clings
May make the wistful spirit preen her wings
For what the Sea depicts in many a mood.

SONNETS

FALLING STARS

BRIGHT love, truth, holy zeal and honesty,
Why sparkle like the silvery host of heaven,
Yet lapse like his who left the true Eleven
One awful night of darkest perjury
To sell the Lord that for his life should die?
When body and soul fell into an abyss,
The due reward of a betraying kiss,
Which none escape who share his treachery.
Pure stars of virtue, quickly ye dissolve!
Like meteors, more often in a shower
Than singly, doth your glittering grace descend.
Yet Mercy even traitors can absolve,
And make new glory glisten at the end
In all who let you slip some evil hour.

‘IN A MOMENT OF TIME’

TO reckon by Divine arithmetic
Is computation that disdains the force
Of all that regulates our temporal course.
Time’s pendulum once gave a single tick,
And age-long realm and body-politic
In all their splendour charmed His inner eyes
Who might have owned them, if but worldly-wise,
But whose superb recoil was quite as quick.
So may the tempter flash upon our view.
A crown, for duty ; wealth, for toil and strife ;
And ‘in a moment’ we must make the choice
Of grasping what would sully heart and life,
Or bidding the foul fiend begone anew—
To rue it ever, or for aye rejoice

NEW POEMS

BENEATH A MARTIN'S NEST

WHAT do I see? Within yon circling earth
So comfortably lined, a callow brood
That every moment win their needful food
From the untiring pair who gave them birth,
And spare no effort for their children's good ;
Who ply them with the insect food they capture,
And hover round them in parental rapture,
Quite negligent of their own livelihood.
And will He cease, Whose Nature blends in one
A Father's pity and a Mother's care,
To feed us from the wingèd wealth around,
Us fledglings of the Sky in earthly bound?
But let the spirit be unclosed, for none
Except the open-mouthed the banquet share.

TO LITTLE-ENGLANDERS

YE that belittle Britain, do ye think
Contraction can breed grandeur and esteem,
Or profit more the myriads who teem
Around you, sinful, sad, on ruin's brink?
Do not self-centred Nations always sink
Below the Peoples with a world-wide scheme?
We prosper thro' fulfilment of their dream
Who hunger all in Brotherhood to link :
And when, peace-loving, in a last resort,
We take their quarrel up who suffer wrong,
Or front and conquer the unfairly strong,
We do but keep the law of Righteousness
That makes the Teacher dominate the taught,
And bids a Ruler every subject bless.

SONNETS

MISLED BY WRECKERS

BEHOLD them ! broken on the shore of Time,
Like barques beguiled to ruin on the sand,
Thro' lights displayed by some deceiving band
Who add vile theft and murder to the crime.
All now, tho' chartered for a sunny Clime,
And bathed in glory from the beckoning Land,
Lie, soul and body wrecked, on that wild strand
Where sin doth flow, and ebbing, leave foul slime.
Ah ! had they but believed the Chart of old,
The gleaming treachery had vainly shone,
An ancient Light had led them safely on,
A welcome Haven closed a happy course ;
While yon sad tale of folly, vain remorse,
And dark destruction had been left untold.

ULTIMATES

Nor Sin, for it engenders woe and pain ;
Nor Death, for after it is future Life ;
Not Evil, wherewith Good is all at strife,
To keep it down, and over it to reign,
And wear it out till naught of it remain ;
But Love, the heart's blue sun-gilt sea, fair Beauty,
Kind Mercy ever at the brim, brave Duty,
Firm Truth, and Freedom that can brook no chain.
These be the final things : they knew no birth,
Nor will they ebb and flow, or rise and fall.
They in a gracious plenitude combine
To form the very character Divine ;
Nor shall one lack them who inhabits Earth
In that great Day when God is all in all.

NEW POEMS

THE ONWARD VIEW

WE cannot clearly, thro' excess of light,
See aught surrounding or beyond a blaze
Whereon the eye has riveted its gaze :
And so before the spiritual sight
The burning that hell kindles is too bright
For him who down the slope of evil strays
To see the fatal issue of the ways
Divergent from the narrow road of Right.
But God so tempers to the heavenly eye
The flame of holiness, the fire of love,
That quiet contemplation of the glow
Reflected from His calm Eternity
Prepares our vision for the Light above,
And purifies it for the path below.

THE JOYFUL LOOK

A GLITTERING galaxy upon the Deep
Now dances merrily in noonday light ;
Ere long, pure heralds of the shadowing night,
From twilit purple twinkling stars will peep.
Around me creature eyes calm vigil keep,
While tender human orbs divinely bright,
Glance sweetly, some from oceans of delight,
And some from gloom that might have made them
weep.

A glistening pair to me alone belong
Thro' which I ever gaze upon the rest.
The outlook is upon a gleaming throng
That, glad or melancholy, smile their best.
Shall mine be tearful? Nay, forbid the wrong
Ye happy lights from North, South, East, and West !

OLD POËMS

The Author has selected the following poems from his published works for revision and amendment ; the present version of each of them will therefore replace the original one.

CHANCE ENCOUNTERS.*

DEAR friends from childhood, long estranged
Thro' time, and circumstance, and place,
We meet, and tho' the guise be changed,
The old look rises in the face.
Our hands are clasped, our spirits thrill,
And rush to sense's utmost reach ;
Yet heart-warmth on the lip grows chill,
And silence hardly yields to speech.
Brief words may pass, but rarely those
We should have said, or even mean,
As we shall feel when in repose
We quietly review the scene.
No wonder ! for the sudden start
Of recognition palsied thought,
And stopped that music of the heart
Which blithe self-communing had taught.
Yet have I watched two wandering bees
Meet on a rose some golden day
To part upwafted on the breeze,
Both bearing honeyed spoil away ;
And can it be that we shall thief
No nectar from the perfumed flower
Of soul-communion (when we leave)
To hive for many a happy hour ?

* From 'Songs of Universal Life,' p. 48.

OLD POEMS

No need for us to talk—they sing,
Those bees, when they have won the sweet,
But fitly hush their murmuring
For the few moments that they greet.
No need—one word has power to wake
The sleeping hours that never die,
Reweave the rainbows, and remake
The ruined castles in the sky !

A tender gaze, a gentle tone,
And we are just what once we were ;
The former love is all our own,
For both to prize, for each to share :
A wistful smile, and mates of old
Are laughing round us as of yore ;
A welling tear, and they are cold,
And our sad eyes are wet once more.

We part, too soon for friends of youth,
Yet never think we met in vain,
If aught cement the ancient truth,
Or fan a spark of memory's train !
We part—to meet no more in Time,
Yet fragrance from that interview
May haunt us, till we win the Clime
Where faithful hearts their love renew.

THE PAST.*

How quietly It steals upon the mind
 In gentle hours—
Balmy and tender as a lovely wind
 Perfumed by flowers—
Airs from a distant Pole that lightly stray
From field to field, and linger by the way
To rob the eglantine, the new-mown hay,
 The lilied bowers.
So strangely It comes back, that All beyond
 The living Now,
As at the wave of some enchanter's wand,
 We know not how !
A wistful look, a song, an evening chime,
And we are kneeling, free of Space and Time,
At altars where we made in youth's hot prime
 Love's earliest vow.
How true they are, the haunts of happier years
 We loved to range !
Viewed even thro' the haze of gathering tears
 They never change.
Oh ! better far in visionary bliss
To meet them, than in lonely fact to miss
The wonted touch and smile, the welcome kiss,
 Where all is strange.

* From 'Musings and Melodies,' p. 109.

OLD POEMS

How calm they look, the faces that of yore
With rapture shone !
Around them is the quiet of the Shore
Where all are gone.
Suns were they then, oft shadowed by a rain
Of transient tears, a melting mist of pain ;
Pure moons, they now serenely wax to wane
And fade anon,

Divinely beaming, eloquently still,
Too quickly passed
(As echoes of sweet music mock the will
To hold them fast) ;
And tho' in new-born loveliness they rise
And scenes of glory reappear, in guise
So tender that new tears are in our eyes,
Will any last ?

Ah, no ! the Bygone far from us as Death
Has surely fled.
The wandering breezes do but waft the breath
By blossoms shed,
Each, now to us for long a withered flower,
Which to revive transcends Immortal Power.
Eternity will not restore one hour !
The Past is dead.

A SOUL'S APOSTROPHE.*

BE near to guide me still, Angel of Truth !

As in my simple youth

When thou didst never stray ;

For constant to the charge by night and day,

My thoughts were steeped in sunshine of the ray

Shot from thy lustrous eyes.

Let not the glory fade, nor me the rule despise !

I did not scorn, I could not swerve when all

Held me from error's thrall.

Too easy was my course

Perchance, for now I battle with the force

Of guile, and yield too oft with scant remorse.

In life's bewildering maze

I lose the way if thou withdraw thy burning gaze !

Angel of Faith, once was I wholly thine !

In childhood thou didst twine

Fond arms around my heart.

Perhaps, too closely then, for now I start

Oft, like a fledgling eager to depart

From the maternal nest,

To seek in sky or earth a more congenial rest.

* From 'Sonnets and Reveries,' p. 156.

OLD POEMS

Yet well for me to flutter : thus alone

Maybe are fully shown

My limits and thy grace.

Dear Nurse of heavenly freedom, whose kind face

Reclaims my truant heart, in thine embrace,

Sure that the hope is vain,

Like the unfeathered bird, I sink back once again !

Angel of Hope ! hast thou quite fled the scene

Tinged with a rainbow-sheen

Lent by thy glistening wings?

Thy voice no longer lovely music sings,

No finger points me on to fairer things :

The fairest are untold,

Diviner visions yet thy magic may unfold !

O visit me again ! I woo thee now

With thirsty heart : do thou

Flame mid the deepening gloom,

Tint death with iris hues, shed round the tomb

A roseate pledge of dawn, and chant the doom

In some immortal sphere

Of all that shadows bliss, and clouds contentment
here !

AN IMMORTAL SONG.*

I N vain I hoped that Nature's evening psalm
 Would bring me painless calm,
 Till one brave bird outsang
The weary choir ; for while the garden rang
With its sole anthem gently every pang
 Abated, and there crept
O'er unresisting sense a languor, and I slept,

To picture out a painless Paradise
 Where many a sweet surprise
 Both sense and spirit chained ;
And mid my ecstasy the warbler strained
His utmost power anew, and still disdained
 All rivalry next morn
When I awaking rose, to health and might new-born.

Beloved ! wait till evening shadows wrap
 Earth's grove, and illness sap
 My gaiety and ease.
Like the brave bird, keep thy best power to please
And comfort me, for weakness or disease :
 Then trill all voices down,
And sullen Death who hears thee shall relax his
 frown.

* From 'Sonnets and Reveries,' p. 156, where this poem is entitled 'Sing on, sing ever !'

OLD POEMS

Thy vassal bid him be! for sure his sting
 Will hurt not if thou sing
 Of One who for us died:
And when my ravished soul at length shall glide
Into Elysian glory, all beside
 That music, and its theme
Shall be, tho' passing fair, the shadows of a dream—

A dream, for I shall wake to find that Earth
 Is quick with a new birth
 Of song and flowers, to hail
Me freshly robed in strength that cannot fail :
Then thou, new wrought alike, shalt still regale
 My heart with the old lay,
More musical than now, throughout a deathless
 Day.

A REMINISCENCE OF CLEVEDON.*

A^H, that sweet sunny scene, it haunts me yet !
 When rippling fire beset
 A boat just leaving shore,
To bathe a mariner who plied the oar,
With molten gold more radiant than before
 Had ever met my gaze,
Which faded all too soon into the evening haze.

* From 'Sonnets and Reveries,' p. 161.

A DREAM OF PERFECTION

The Channel lost its smile, the glowing hills
Grew dim, as thro' the chills
Of creeping gloom he rowed
Against the rising tide that quickly flowed.
The dying sunset's wild bequest forbode
A wet and wintry night,
When tossing on the waves he vanished from our
sight.

Bright Sun who settest never, my frail barque
Fears no descending dark,
Wind, wave, or final wrack !
O'er life's grey ocean streams Thy shining Track,
And to the Beach long left I voyage back
Upon that golden Band,
Lest ere the fall of night I founder far from land.

A DREAM OF PERFECTION.*

I FOUND it in a vision fair
The beauty I had sought in vain—
A queenly brow mid golden hair
That shone like sungilt rain,
A rippling smile, a heavenly eye
Whose blue disdained the sapphire sky,
A form of symmetry and mould
By new or classic Art untold :

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 25.

OLD POEMS

And all, tho' wondrous bright, excelled
In glory by the quickening soul
That lit the lovely face, and held
The figure in control.

I felt that Virtue here displayed
What threw mortality in shade,
Love, Truth, and Purity, whose birth
Owed naught of parentage to earth.

And yet I never felt alarm
As tho' of an unearthly guest ;
A peerless woman did but charm

My wistful heart to rest.
Before me flashed the archetype
Of fancy, the perfection ripe
That I, in many a sanguine hour,
Had hoped might haunt a mortal bower.

Ah me ! that we should be the sport
Of wild expectancy—that none
Of all with whom we here consort

May prove the longed-for one !
No saint or paragon fulfils
The high ideal she instils.
We mingle, and experience shows
The shadow cast by all that glows.

Our spirits with a web of light
Encircle one, whose frown may well
Unweave a charm too frail and bright,
And dissipate the spell.

A DREAM OF PERFECTION

Or we in other eyes have read
Unspoken love, and truth unsaid,
Till suddenly they ceased to shine,
For what, we never could divine.

And so before that faultless grace
Of form and spirit low I bent ;
And on me lingers still the trace
Of lofty passion spent.

For who shall blame my wild regret,
When half awake, with eyelids wet,
I knew my radiant guest had flown,
And I, fond dreamer, was alone?

Alone—and shall I never meet
The one for whom my spirit sighs?
Will Time and Sense for ever cheat
And visions tantalize?

Nay—what the shaping soul conceives,
That somewhere somehow she receives.
For nothing holds an empty force,
And water rises to its source.

Perchance in some prenatal clime
One loved me, who has been allowed
To penetrate for this brief time

The dim dividing shroud :
Or maybe Heaven, to calm me, cast
The shadow here of what at last
I shall discover and embrace—
A perfect soul, and form, and face.

WAITING.*

WAITING—'tis the law of earthly being
 Stamped Divinely on the mortal state;
We, fond dupes of sense, for all our seeing,
 All our feeling, own the spell, and wait.

Waiting here like children, hopeful, fearful,
 For life's panorama to unfold ;
Sitting hand in hand, now sad, now cheerful,
 While the chequered drama is unrolled.

Waiting, as a girl enchanted lingers,
 Work in hand, till sweeter songs be sung ;
Dreaming oft when plying busy fingers,
 That life's truest chords are yet unstrung.

Waiting, as a sun-gilt lover paces
 Hungry-eyed the flowery trysting-lane—
Craving thus the yet unvisioned graces
 Glowing hope and radiant fancy feign.

Waiting wistfully, as patients languish
 For the doctor's call, nor brook delay ;
Starting up to hear mid mortal anguish
 Health's fair chariot-wheels upon the way.

Waiting for a flash from Heaven, that brightening
 Toil and pain can make them look Divine ;
As a marsh lit up by summer lightning,
 For the moment glorified, will shine.

* From 'Lyrical Studies,' p. 38.

WAITING

Waiting, like mute bards for inspiration,
Would-be seers, for some unerring guide ;
Waiting vainly, like the faithless nation
For a needless sign, a proof denied.

Waiting, as the wintry frost-bound gardens
Look for sunlight and a genial breeze ;
Thus the hearts that chilly terror hardens
Stay, for Love's warm virtue to unfreeze.

Waiting, as the summer meadows tarry
Till the clouds descend in cooling showers—
Certain that the melting mist will carry
Life and cheer to these parched souls of ours.

Waiting, as the world expects a poet,
Ere his star arise, expressionless,
Full of hope, unformed except he shew it,
All unconscious of a dire distress.

Waiting, as the soul desires her prophet,
Self-deceived, ere he expose her wrong.
Dead to right till he convince her of it ;
Then, to do it quickly, brave and strong.

Waiting, as spring morning-watchers listen
For the cuckoo's note, the blackbird's song ;
Dawn's faint fire, oh ! will it never glisten ?
How can matin-music sleep so long ?

OLD POEMS

Waiting, as doomed captives, for the warder's
Sudden flash of light and turning key,
Then, obedient Death, fulfil thine orders,
Open wide, and set the bondsmen free !

MY FATHER'S BIBLE.*

IT peeped from out the pile of books
A random hand had strewn around,
And begged of me by tender looks
To lift it from the ground.
'A thirsting eye,' it seemed to say,
'Drank in my beauty day by day ;
A hungry heart devoured my worth—
His eye and heart who gave thee birth.'
Alas ! it charmed me not for long ;
Mine was the story often told :
I took vile ore of tale and song,
And left the precious gold.
All folly hath the seed within
Of its reward : I did not win
What study might have won, I lost
A curb of evil, to my cost.
My Father, did thy spirit plead
With mine, or had the Truth a spell
At length to make me lift and read
What thou didst love so well ?

* From 'Music from the Maze,' p. 115.

MY FATHER'S BIBLE

Mid feelings I could not resist
The Book was reverently kissed.
Ah ! wisdom also doth contain
The germ of what her converts gain.

And lo ! it was as when one finds,
Back in a happy haunt, each flower
Shed an aroma that reminds

Of some sweet bygone hour.
Rare perfume from each lovely tale
Was borne upon the heavenly gale
That swept my spirit, and I read
As one reviving from the dead.

O it was wisdom, after years
Of disregard the leaves to turn !
They brimmed my wintry eyes with tears ;
They made my bleak heart burn.

The impress strange and sweet they wore
Of him whose name and guise I bore ;
In part from notes on many a text,
Born of his mood when glad or vexed.

These lighting up dark words of truth,
It grew on me that here was one
Who left them not in age or youth

Dishonoured or undone.
Once more, a boy I sat beside
The scholarly and gentle guide,
Whose glowing spirit all could trace
In his illuminated face.

OLD POEMS

Nor this alone—the Book portrayed
His likeness Who transfigured all
In every age on whom He made
 A glory-beam to fall.

Dark ancients shone like stars thro' Him ;
And soon I traced in outline dim
Familiar features, half-Divine,
The Christ that lit thee, Father mine !

Bright stars, for all their silvery spell,
Are too removed from twilit men,
Who steer by earthly light as well
 Thro' quicksand, reef, or fen :
And so the saintly tales of old
Are far above us, till retold
In some pure homely life, whose glow
Is round the wanderer below.

And such was thine—a life devout
Born of belief that here alone
Was bread Divine, and all without,
 A serpent, or a stone.

Not thine perchance their larger creed
Who Christ in man and nature read,
And hold that here with high intent
The human and Divine are blent.

But perish strife ! it matters not
That we, imbued with modern lore,
Reject or foster much of what
 Was held or shunned of yore ;

NATURE'S SUPPLY

If, following our simple sires,
We lead the life this Book requires ;
No creed is wrong, whate'er it be,
That makes men, Father, live like thee !

We gaze upon the pictures true
Of soldier-ancestors, and hope
That since they live in us, we too
 With foes may bravely cope :
So, not despairingly I look
Upon thy portrait in this Book ;
And thank the Power that made me wise
Thereon to rest my rebel eyes !

NATURE'S SUPPLY.*

Two cravings mock us here : the one for change,
 Born of our swift mortality, yet nursed
By many a lovely gleam, fitful and strange,
Of that Eternity which held us first ;
How emptily we try to quench the thirst !
What heart has ever left a means untried ?
We quaff a sparkling current, and unversed
In life's sad lore we leave it satisfied ;
And lo ! our fevered lips return to that cool tide.

* From 'Music from the Maze,' p. 119.

OLD POEMS

The other craving is for permanence :
For *that* the God within us genders sighs
Amid the ecstasy of thrilling sense :
Eternal fountains flash before our eyes
Untasted to de'ude and tantalize.
We are like those who haunt a summer stream
Fed by no rain from the unpitying skies ;
Or desert pilgrims led on by the gleam
Of taunting hopes that fade like an illusive dream.

Yet He who made us thirst doth bid us drink
Here, even here, from an unfailing spring.
Nature doth beckon us (a lovely link
Between Himself and every human thing)
That to her plenitude our want we bring,
Where is enough awhile our thirst to slake
For that calm constancy whereof I sing :
And when we covet change, if we betake
Our fever to her fount, we lose the throb and ache.

Immortal mountains, never-failing sea,
Perennial plains, undying firmament !
I feel your spell ; your power encircles me ;
With my divinest being are ye blent.
Ye are not like the faces o'er me bent
In love one moment, and the next in blame ;
Nor like the cherished forms that Death hath rent
From my lone life. Ye always look the same,
A witness to the truth of God's unchanging Name.

NATURE'S SUPPLY

Yet do ye meet the other fond desire ;
No day, no hour, but a reviving draught
From your deep river cools my spirit-fire.
Never have I rejoiced, but ye have laughed,
And never wept, but ye with subtle craft
Have made your beauty melt in answering tears :
And each revolving season have I quaffed
The rippling verdure, vowing that the years
Hold each a varying wealth unguessed till it appears.

Abiding rest—'tis graven on the whole !
All looks a quiet dream, an endless sleep,
Untouched by times that speed, and tides that roll—
His Empire Who perpetual state doth keep :
Yet ceaseless movement too—shy joys that peep
And vanish, wings that come and go ; bright flowers
That wither to the gales that o'er them sweep.
High grandeur, which doth mock our fleeting powers
Above ephemeral grace, and lovely motion, towers.

Sweet natural vision ! 'tis thy charm unique
To our twin longing thus to minister—
To thus allay our every whim and freak
By means that best befit its character ;
A spell so mighty, potent sorcerer !
Lurks in that blend of changefulness below
And constancy above, that I refer
All moods to thee, I who am mingled so,
The heir of lofty calm, the sport of ebb and flow.

NATURE'S SOLACE.*

O H! if Time bereave thee
Of rainbows in airy Youth,
And if Love deceive thee
And palsy thy hold of Truth ;
If the Earth be dreary
And chill in Life's after-stage,
Or thy heart grow weary
Of empty delight in Age,

Muse amid the mountains,
Green dells and enamelled plain,
Where moss-broidered fountains
Discourse a pure silvery strain ;
While by forest altars
Gay warblers renew Spring vows,
Ere the cuckoo falters,
And flowers flutter down from the boughs.

Dream beside the Ocean,
When silvery lightnings flash,
Attuned to the motion,
And sound of the swell and plash,
With a heart to listen
For the voice that appeals in its tone,
While the far ships glisten
And fade in the dreamy Unknown.

* From 'The Exiles,' p. 24.

NATURE'S SOLACE

Then on fancy's pinion
Be thy soul swiftly wafted thence
To the bleak dominion
Of Winter's omnipotence.
Sweep the dreary hillside,
Mute dingle, and flowerless field,
The dank withered rillside,
Bare elm, naked hedge, and grey weald.

Thence to where the breakers
Uptoss their wild hopeless heads,
While o'er furrowed acres
No moon her calm silver sheds ;
And the winds seem urging
The waves to deep, dark despair—
Whose unquiet surging
Is the knell of a sunset fair.

Then of this bethink thee,
Thou art kin to the Spirit behind :
Birth and Destiny link thee
With Him Whose true Being is Mind ;
Who lasts thro' all changes,
And joys mid the spring and fall ;
Whose wisdom arranges
The calm, and the billow for all.

Lo ! the chequered stages
Of Life's fleeting shadowy round,

OLD POEMS

The joy that none gauges,
The grief that no other can sound,
Fortune's swift reversal,
Dawn's hope, and Eve's pitiful wrecks,
Are the soul's rehearsal
For Calm that no billow can vex.

SPENT ILLUSIONS.*

A MOUNTAIN met my wondering eyes
In the strange wistful dawn of life,
That held communion with the skies
Aloof from earthly care and strife,
Now touched by dreamy morn's pink rays,
Or steeped in gold meridian flow ;
Now robed in afternoon's soft haze,
Or tinged with sunset's after-glow.

One day I neared it, and it seemed
To owe far less to Heaven than Earth :
The rose, the gold, the amber, beamed
On it no light of peerless worth ;
The purple glamour was dispelled,
'Twas constant grey, and common green ;
Soft smiling pastures I beheld,
Yet rocky chasms frowned between.

* From 'The Exiles,' p. 50.

SPENT ILLUSIONS

But climbing it, there came to view
Charms curtained from my former sight.
In crevices and crannies grew
Rare flowers, round which were insects bright :
Divinest melody uprose .
From every dingle that I passed,
And when I won the quiet snows
I breathed celestial calm at last.

And thus the mountains of our Youth
Soon cease to look a lovely dream.
All human grandeur, nearing Truth
Dismantles of the fairy gleam :
The spirit light, and moral strength,
False Fancy's mask, are torn away
By Time and Chance, and we at length,
Find common vesture robe dull clay.

But closer still, the loveliness
That lurks in every heart appears,
And beauties we could never guess
Peep out to patient eyes and ears.
Mourn not the old imagined sight,
The fair ascent thou wouldst have trod,
If, measuring another's height,
The summit find thee nearer God !

UNDYING TONES.*

HATH the music ended
That thrilled in the Long-ago?
The notes that oft blended
Divinely in ebb and flow,
The gay rippling laughter
To tell of Delight's full tide,
The sighs that come after
As back the spent waters glide.

Did the tuneful story
Whose chime was the breath of Life,
In the noon of its glory,
Dissolve into echoing strife?
Have the sweet words vanished,
The vows that fond lovers swore,
To some realm where banished
Delights fail for evermore?

Nay, no sound can perish
That rippleth the waves of Space,
Spoken words that we cherish
Survive as the speaking face :
And the boundless Mansion
Will keep what hath met the ear
For a great expansion
To crown every limit here.

* From 'The Exiles,' p. 54.

UNDYING TONES

Yet for that we wait not ;
The present can yield a bliss,
There be joys that sate not
Down deep in the heart's abyss.
There at will we capture
Form, feature, and tone as well ;
In some hour of rapture
All riseth to Memory's spell.

The lost is before us,
The song as it left the heart ;
A glow shineth o'er us,
Ah me ! that it must depart.
That the magic broken
Should leave us more lonely yet
That the words respoken,
So lightly we all forget !

MUSA MEA.*

HERE, in a happy dell
Languishes one,
Cold as a wintry spell,
Warm as the sun.

* From 'Poems of Life and Death,' p. 1.

OLD POEMS

I, our last interview,
Found her I came to woo
Now a fiancée true,
Now a veiled nun.

Fair was the hour when she
Gladdened me first :
Glory gilt land and sea ;
Music outburst ;
All the enchanted Nine
Beamed in delight divine
When her immortal wine
Quenched my soul-thirst.

She, from a Realm above,
I, from below,
Blent in unearthly love
For weal or woe.
Here then, where first we met,
Would I pay love's full debt ;
But she, the vain coquette
Will come and go.

Come, as a fairy skims
Earth but to touch ;
Go, just to air her whims,
Wooed over-much.

Come, merely to contemn
Scheme, art, and stratagem,
Go, as her garment's hem
Wildly I clutch.

MUSA MEA

Come, as a perfume rare
Steals on the sense,
Or a forgotten air

Wakes innocence :
Go, like a fickle breeze,
Fondling more favoured trees,
Or as fair fancies tease,
Hurrying hence.

Oft have I dreamt alone,
Till the sweet fay,
Has to my arbour flown,
As if to stay,
Glancing, with footfall light ;
Then, in a charming fright,
Vanishing like a bright
Rainbow in May.

Seeking her vainly, hot
Oft would I rest,
As from within the grot
Flits a cool guest ;
' Here was I all the while,'
Hints her provoking smile
Tho' she, for all her guile,
Leaves me unblest.

Yet have I lingered oft
Here, in her power,
Chained to a bondage soft
For a bright hour :

OLD POEMS

Glancing like one possessed ;
Roving, while all at rest ;
Fretting, yet fully blest,
 Rich thro' her dower—

Beauty of word, and sound,
 Fancy, and thought ;
Wealth in a moment found,
 Long vainly sought ;
Fruit for unfertile years,
 Wild feeling, passion-tears,
Song fit for seraph ears,
 Music untaught.

True to our trysting vow,
 Trembling I wait :
Hopeful I enter now
 Courting my fate.
Yet, if I sue in vain,
Oft will I woo again,
Mid meadow, moor, and lane,
 Early and late.

‘BEHOLD A PALE HORSE !’*

NONE know the Rider’s hue? The ravished seer
Saw but the charger clear—
The phantom form of one

That never ends a course with Time begun,
Now fleet, now gradual, as wind or sun,
And haunts a spectral glade,
Adewy, moonlit vale where all that flowers will fade.

My God, the Horseman must be pale indeed,
So wan the steed !

The sum of every force,
That wafts him onward—Nature’s waning course,
And Man’s decline—in these behold the Horse
Disrobed of mystic veil !
Not always terrible or fierce, but only pale ;

Pale as the close of some November day
Unalterably grey—
Or the bleak landscape’s face
When Autumn storms have swept a faded grace ;
And leaves, the sere survivors of a race
Once vivid, fresh, and fair,
Now quiver, ere they quit the trees for chilly air.

Pale as the twilight after sunset glow—
Or May’s pink orchard snow,

* From ‘Poems of Life and Death,’ p. 4.

OLD POEMS

A bitter blight has robbed
Of beauty : pale as fainting flowers that throbbed
With Spring's warm pulse, o'er which soft gales
have sobbed

Vain tears—whose early wrong
The mellow blackbird near bewails in tender song.

Pale as the kind physician's face who knells
In all that he foretells,
Departing hope—as theirs
Who cheer the sufferer, stifling sad despairs :
Pale with the pallor that a patient wears
Who bids a fond adieu
To hallowed scenes, ere long to vanish from his view.

Pale as the wasted hands that tremble o'er
A life work touched no more ;
A letter half unpenned ;
A book that weakness scarce can comprehend :
Pale as the lips that kiss them, or that read
For them to rest awhile—
That quiver now in grief, and now for comfort smile.

Pale as the dreams that shone in glowing youth
Look in the light of Truth—
As hopes that then engage
The heart appear to disenchanted age—
As golden locks, bright childhood's heritage,

HEART TREASURES

Become as life descends
With feeble steps to that cold bourn where Beauty
ends.

Hast thou no provender, O Courser sad ?
No stable ? art thou mad
Careering thus ? so vile,
So helpless we ! O spare the spur awhile
Thou shrouded Horseman ! bid us play and smile !
Ah me ! no voice, no pause ;
Ye wend your cruel way, we woo relentless Laws.

HEART TREASURES.*

A GALLERY of Art receives
Memorials of many a face
That some accomplished painter leaves
On record for its grace :
Photographers can combat well
The claim of artists to excel,
And dainty albums link in one
Such portraits of the rival Sun.

But I commission one, whose work
Combines the subtlety of each ;
For in it truth and beauty lurk,
Past Art or Nature's reach.

* From 'Poems of Life and Death,' p. 49.

OLD POEMS

A likeness I bespeak, and lo !
The finished face begins to glow,
In happier hue, in brighter look,
Than aught in gallery or book.

My peerless pictures, each a gem,
Collected, I arrange at will ;
The hanging needs no stratagem,
The proper light, no skill.
The hall that holds them and her name
Whom I commission are the same ;
'Tis Memory whose portraits stand
Thus fair and faultless at command.

And down the corridor alone
My spirit in self-commune talks,
As one, whose winter-guests have flown,
Soliloquizing walks :
Or, if you will, my heart has won
Fond photographs from Love's bright sun
Which, touched with tender grace and hue,
Are left by Memory on view.

Ah ! there they beam, the faces dear
I love so well, the young, the old ;
Some lingering my lot to cheer,
Some—some with story told—

HEART TREASURES

Still here with deathless eyes that seek
And follow mine—with lips that speak—
With smiles that shame all vain regret,
All tremulous tones, and eyelids wet.

This wealth beguiling ease and toil
Needs no insurance from decay :
Swift Time may rob, sly Chance may spoil,
But these none steal away :
No dust of ages round them clings ;
Each year some choice addition brings ;
With Memory's virtue they increase,
And perish only when I cease.

MEETING THE DAWN.*

I WAKE betimes, for sleep fulfils its work
In gendering unrest : the orient skies
Are flameless still, and night things prowl and lurk ;
Yet at yon herald cock-crow I arise,
My lure the promise of a kindling glance
(Mine if it be but claimed)
Half wasted on a world of sleep or ignorance.

* From 'Lyrical Studies,' p. 51, where this poem is entitled 'Ode to Dawn.'

OLD POEMS

I find some labourers, a milkmaid fair,
Two tired-out dancers, and a noisy sot,
A lady hurrying to Matin-prayer,
An early housewife sweeping out her cot,
All too self-centred to enjoy my bliss.

What! active and about,
Yet senseless to the charm of quiet scenes like this?

Here comes a conscious girl, and near her, one
By her sole magic drawn, both blind to all,
She his lone world, and he her rising sun.
Ah! well, I tremble on a truer thrall,
A brighter bond, for lo! a first faint smile
Lights up the tuneless grove;
Hail, gentle calm! still birds, dream on, nor stir
awhile!

Enough, to watch the rosy tint, as when
A country maiden flushes to first love:
Enough, that I inhale in this pure glen
Scent from below, and freshness from above.
Ay, let me linger o'er the opening spell!
True lips are sealed for long,
And lovers gaze awhile, when they have much to tell.

For Dawn and I are lovers: long ago
Her beauty woke me to a willing pledge
That, at this hallowed hour, her golden glow
Should wax upon me often at this hedge:

MEETING THE DAWN

Methinks that she divined my wish for calm,
As now the whim is spent
Brisk sylvan forms awake, and birds begin their psalm.

But hark! a rustle over wood and field ;
And now, ah! words could never paint the trill
Fresh from a myriad minstrels, half concealed,
Half visible, conspiring all to thrill
The spirit with new glory and delight ;
As when a lady fair
Embowered, breathes virgin song to her enchanted
knight.

The pair in Paradise, what did they feel ?
The dreaming Adam, at the first bright Dawn,
Did sunbeam, or glad song, his eyes unseal,
Or very joy at Night's dark veil withdrawn?
And Eve, fair outcome of his sleep profound,
Her earliest thrills of sense
Were vision of the flush, and audience of the sound.

And we their children—who that faces East
This tuneful hour, will leave it unimpressed?
First a fire-worshipper, then Nature's priest,
Man offers more than when he fronts the West.
A prophet of the beautiful, he views
The sunset pageantry :
But incense from the heart goes up to morning hues.

OLD POEMS

Nor is the poet ever uninspired
By matin freshness told to eye and ear,
Unfolding Dawn, thro' thy advances fired
And by thy music charmed I hail thee here!
Born of the spell, this song now faints away
 With thy fast-melting reign.
Adieu, our tryst is spent, we vanish into day!

IN EXTREMIS.*

HER eyelids close—we think she sleeps;
 But mortal guesses wrong her state:
'Tis that her summoned spirit keeps
 Tryst at the Royal gate.
Ere the Key opens, left alone
For all that human cheer can yield,
Till the fair King, the splendid Throne,
The Realm of Glory, are revealed.

See round her ashen lips the trace
Of joy and sadness, like the play
Of light and shade o'er the cold face
 Of some December day!
The sadness born of mist beneath,
The joy of glimmering above,
Ere chilly Earth's last vapour-wreath
Shall vanish in unclouded Love.

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 34.

IN EXTREMIS

What, tho' in retrospect she views
Life's weary course from start to goal
If she, in prospect can peruse
 Heaven's half unfolded scroll?
Tho' Memory's panorama cloud
The spirit's outlook for awhile,
Hope's rainbow hues will mock the shroud
Until eternal Sunshine smile.

Ah! why the evanescent frown
That troubles the pale countenance?
Does she review youth's faded crown,
 Spent beauty, dead romance?
A child, does she now melt in tears?
A dreamy girl, dissolve in sighs?
A woman, feel the care of years,
The failure of some vanished prize?

A lover in a happy dell
Oft met her—does she now re-shed
The heart-drops falling at the knell
 Which tolled him to the dead?
Perchance she mourns her failings few,
For sins who dares to call them, now
That Christ has stamped her gold as true,
And left His hall-mark on her brow,

The seal of gloom-dispelling Joy?
For lo its impress now! what sights,
What sounds, what reveries employ
 Her heart, what rare delights?

OLD POEMS

Is it contrition changed to bliss,
The rapture of a Past forgiven?
Their beckoning smile, their nearing kiss,
Once from her bright home-circle riven?

The pilot Seraphs hovering near
To waft her harmless—is it these?
Nay, 'tis His welcome sounding clear,
His step who holds the Keys.
Her lids uncloset—one last bequest,
A faint fond farewell, meets our eyes,
And her pure spirit joins the Blest
Who reign with Him in Paradise.

TRANSFIGURED.*

I WATCH a ball by rampant feet
Tossed wildly to and fro,
The mad advance, the grim retreat,
The frenzied ebb and flow.
I hear the loud huzzas that greet
Heroic friend or foe.

And lo ! the field becomes the World,
High Heaven my vantage ground ;

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 43.

TRANSFIGURED

The ball thus bandied, carried, whirled,
A soul 'mid earthly round ;
The sides against each other hurled
With shame or honour crowned

Embattled Angels, these of Light,
And those of Darkness, strong,
This side, to near the goal of Right,
That side, the goal of Wrong ;
While clustering near to view the fight
Are ranged a Spirit throng.

God ! how they strive and strain and press
Who the weak mortal claim,
Now grasped by Evil's utmost stress—
Heaven mar its force and aim !
Now at the feet of those who bless—
Christ speed them to the game !

Cheer them, pure Spirits ! Like the sun
Flash out a golden blaze !
Joy ! Time is over, they have won !
Their charge they hold and raise !
While echoing plaudits, now begun,
Shall chime eternal praise.

RESURRECTION.*

IT is not only that, when I forecast
The night that soon will round my earthly day,
The laboured breath that is to be my last,
The dirge, the burial, the bed of clay,
I win a hope from lower life uprisen
Thro' Nature's chemistry,
That I may steal up from the mortal prison
In new vitality,
To Being ampler than I yet have known :
The hope I truly have, but not from that alone.

It is not only that the quickening Spring
Repairs the Autumn waste—that happy blooms
Are cradled in their own decay, and cling
Not fondly *to*, but flourish *from* their tombs—
That every wind-swept tree which dots the glen
Whispers of life from death—
And violets bow, and lilies nod 'Amen,'
At every zephyr's breath—
That sickled glory in the harvest field
Hath by its martyrdom the human doctrine sealed.

It is not only that the crawling worm
Finds thro' the portal of a mummy tomb
Imperial state at its terrestrial term,
A sylph-like figure, an ethereal plume

* From 'Poems of a Naturalist,' p. 31.

RESURRECTION

Of Beauty's loveliest pencilling and hue,
And splendour's sunniest glow,
With every line and spot depicted true
That marked its form below ;
To sport, and dream, and wander 'mid bright bowers
And sip fine nectar from a wealth of honeyed flowers.

It is not only that some vernal nest
Contains the plumage that shall grace the grove,
The fairy feet that find arboreal rest,
The magic melody that trills of love—
That eggs lie calmly (till the quickening spell)
Of all that swim, and creep,
With potency enfolded in the shell
Where limb and organ sleep—
That music, mirth, and motion preach aloud
The early casement of new life is but a shroud.

It is not only that in every Age
The world hath dreamt of ghosts unbodied yet,
Or robed anew—that the immortal Page
Reveals the One who, paying Nature's debt,
Stood forth in Glory as the human Type ;
Fair sample of the whole ;
Prime ear in the vast cornfield now unripe ;
Pure pledge that every soul,
Truant from innocence, and far from bliss,
May put on the best Robe and feel the Father's kiss.

OLD POEMS

It is not only these, tho' thanks I give
To every proof or hint that I survey :
My naked hope is simply that I live,
And living, lack full freedom, and fair play,
I want to fly, yet mourn an embryo wing ;
 Mine is the larva-state :
I have a tuneless tongue, who long to sing ;
 The nestling now of Fate,
Ripe joys before my prescient fancy flit,
Full song, unshadowed gold, a sapphire Infinite.

I am the boy that chased the butterfly,
Whose purple bloom lay tarnished in his grasp—
The lovesick Cleopatra who doth lie
'Mid perfumed flowers whence steals the fatal asp—
The Tantalus unquenching fiery thirst,
 Cool-watered to the chin—
The Paracelsus sanguine at the first
 Yet impotent to win—
The Paul oft yielding to an evil mood,
With futile wish and foiled endeavour to be good.

Dowered with desire for Truth I cannot gain ;
I know 'twill somewhere bless my aching eyes—
For beckoning Beauty, now pursued in vain :
I vow at last to overtake the prize—
For Love, whose lightning glances mock me here ;
 I feel 'twill sun me yet—
For Joy's far charm that disenchants when near ;
 'Tis to my heart a debt—

RESURRECTION

For Holiness, which now has flown my earth
One day it will be mine, or empty was my birth.

The one unsated thing. Were so I born—
Who fathered fierce demand, yet barred supply,
(My being's Author) were below my scorn,
Who might have cast for weal, yet bids me sigh.
If thus *we* do within our narrow sphere,

We shame our Pedigree :

Yet are we bound, nay fashioned, to revere,

And so it cannot be :

I, yielding homage to my spirit's Sire,
Await a coming World of satisfied desire.

In view of this my hope, I hail the thrall
Of grief and wrong, ay! even evil's bond.
Dear tokens are they that Earth is not all!
To me the nameless thought, or thrill are fond
As peeping flowers to one who pines for spring ;

As the faint pink first born,

Or music of the birds that earliest sing

On a sweet summer morn

To the tired watcher thro' a tearful night ;
Prophetic of a day of unimagined light.

Nor less I hail the glances that unflash,
The flicker that dies down, the fading gleam ;
Nor linger sadly o'er each cold grey ash
That paves the furnace of Youth's flaming dream:

OLD POEMS

I will not chide the post-meridian shade ;
Nor if my sun sink down
With tender brightness, glowing but to fade,
Will I repine ; nor frown
Tho' pink auroras in the twilit sky
With evanescent glow stream up to faint and die.

For all, as for myself, since each partakes
Of my dishonour, evil, woe, and thirst,
And God doth bear the charge for what He makes,
And Right were Wrong with aught for ever cursed:
Nor as He bids us each the other love
Shall we for ever part,
Some agonized below, some rapt above.
Else better for the heart
That now embraces all to linger here :
Perish the joy where Love must narrow down its
sphere !

Father of spirits ! naught can quench the breath
Pent in this pulsing heart ; nor couldest Thou
Inbreathe it back again from me at death.
The gifts wherewith Thou dost Thy child endow
Are all ' without repentance ' : I the sum
Of them must ever live :
Whither I vanish to, or what become
I care not, so Thou give
Fulfilment of the Promise at my birth
Mocked heretofore by vain and disappointing Earth !

CHANSON AU TABAC.*

EXOTIC! from the West
That crowned the deep unrest
Of one who would not quench the gleam of his
prophetic soul,
A true Columbus thou,
Whose glimmer can endow
Our hemisphere of weal with what can make it a
bright whole.

The stale old world of strife,
Dull care and weary life,
We dwell in thro' the half of Day that hails
from glowing East :
But when in westering skies
Calm beauty fronts our eyes,
The soul's horizon feels too strait ; she pants to
be released.

She voyages from noise,
And narrow aims and joys,
To seek an outlet for her store, a playground for
her health,
With thee as pioneer,
To point her on and steer,
To what she wants, a golden clime, an ample
commonwealth.

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 108.

OLD POEMS

For one thy fumes enshroud
Is in a glory-cloud ;
And while upon a throne of ease, with calm
contentment crowned,
The hemispheres of both
Activity and sloth
Are joined into a genial world symmetrically
round.

‘ Ha ! ha ! ’ he seems to say,
‘ The Atlas of to-day
Can bear his burden better than the Titan of the
Past.

The world upon me now
Will smooth my wrinkled brow,
While this kind antidote to ill, and soft aroma last.’

Talk of Olympian joy
Above Earth’s sad employ,
Ambrosial food and nectar drink, can aught with
this compare?

Yon waves of perfume roll
From Lethe o’er my soul
To bring forgetfulness and drown all melancholy
care.

See from thy vapours soon
His face, a quiet moon,
Emerges, to shed silvery peace home-darkness to
dispel :

CHANSON AU TABAC

Or in the day perchance,
A cheery sun will glance
Thro' cloudy mists on weary souls that work or
buy and sell.

Thou doctor of the mind
And frame, from thee we find
The health that genders repartee and merriment
and mirth !

Physician of our hearts,
Thy medicine imparts
A hope that can illuminate the darkest days of
earth !

A charm resides in thee
To bid the devil flee,
The demon of despair, the fiends that torture
nerves and bones :

And oh ! thy wizard power
In some illusive hour
To call a panorama up that Truth, alas ! disowns.

We view a wintry world
Perhaps, where gales have hurled
The embers of a burning beech or sycamore to
death :

Thy wand has waved, and lo !
The gentle zephyrs blow,
And warblers woo their mates, and charm green
Earth with tuneful breath.

OLD POEMS

Beneath thy spell once more
We roam a dreamy shore,
Where pleading waves and plaintive airs chime in
with Love's soft sigh :
The magic spent, forlorn
We can but muse and mourn
O'er broken vow, and vanished joy, and grey
despairing sky.

On broken wreaths of fume
Hope wings her flight, and gloom
Sails in, and slowly settling down, broods o'er the
lonely heart.

A final whiff, and bliss
Will bridge the dark abyss,
To crown thee as the royal cure for trouble, care,
and smart.

CHANGE*

CHANGE—I scorned the word in youth ;
'Be it mine to honour Truth :
Thought and feeling now expressed
Hold firm empire in the breast :
Hearts once linking clasp for ever,
Love and Friendship alter never—
'Never till the earthly scene
Spend the blue and lose the green—

* From 'Poems of Life and Death,' p. 108.

CHANGE

Never till proud ocean's face,
Calm or furrowed, forfeit grace :
I, till then devoutly true,
Fear no faithlessness in you.'

So I said, so you replied—
We who, lingering side by side,
Fashioned twin abodes in air,
Wove bright visions two should share,
'Mid the school quadrangle talking,
Down a moonlit alcove walking.

Change—Ah me ! for vanished years,
Beggared hopes, triumphant fears :
We whose worlds once interwove,
Now dissevered singly rove,
Bosom comrades rarely meeting,
Rapt adorers coldly greeting.

Worse, far worse ! some interlink,
Some—with other hearts, who think,
Guileless of the amours past,
These new bonds will ever last—
Ever last ! deceptive mystery
True regard's repeating history !

Friends and Lovers ! can it be
You have failed to find in me
All you hoped for then, that now
Feeling chilled, and broken vow,

OLD POEMS

Tell the sad, too frequent story,
Noonday gloom for morning glory.

Hard to think that tho' no sun
Brighter shone than we, o'er one ;
Never star illumed a throng
As our lustre did for long ;
Others rise while we are setting,
One and all our reign forgetting.

Ay, but harder still to feel
What the heart can scarce conceal—
That the flame, the glow, the zest
Burn but faintly in our breast :
Vaunted Truth, Love fondly cherished !
Can it be ye nigh have perished ?

Better ache beneath neglect
Than departed self respect.
Why, if friends of old disdain,
Fret we if our truth remain,
We, like God, for ever yearning
While His Love wins no returning ?

But to own our worth unreal,
To bewail a lost ideal,
This is bitter : is it true
That I share the woe with you ?
You who have, I doubt not, musings
Such as mine, and self accusings.

CHANGE

Is it true? ah! wherefore not?
We who share in Nature's lot,
Ever blending tears with mirth ;
Denizens of fickle Earth
Watching light and shadow's motion
O'er the waves of changeful ocean ;

Breathers of capricious air ;
Students of meridian glare
Shadowed soon—of dying day
Swift uncrimsoning and grey ;
Sentinels for fitful lightning ;
Dupes of golden dawn's fair brightening ;

We that watch the roving breeze
Woo at morn, at even freeze—
Kiss the hyacinths in turn
While the envious roses burn—
Toy with dahlias bold, yet stopping
Not o'er modest bells down dropping ;

We that know the blackbird's song
Slumbered in the ivy long ;
Who will startle from a spray
Thrushes' eggs we find to-day ;
Who the peacock grub now feeding
Soon shall track, in beauty speeding ;

We, in brief, who mark that none
Linger as in youth begun ;

OLD POEMS

Naught for long retains a mode,
All soon wander on life's road ;
Nature's changelings, can our state
Triumph o'er the common fate ?

Yet our fresh young heart appealed
Fitly to the truth revealed
By the Constancy below,
Or behind the fleeting Show.
Love ^{but} ~~best~~ seems to be subsiding
If the fountain be abiding.

Nothing hopelessly abates ;
Never all evaporates ;
Be the fine aroma spent,
There remains the spring of scent ;
Music faints, with feeble fingers,
Yet the lyre that lends it lingers.

Yes, believe me, we, who knew
Love's rare magic, bid adieu
Not for ever to his spell !
'Mid fair groves of Asphodel
We shall sport—here, frail beginners,
There, fond wooers, faithful winners.

IN THE SCENES OF YOUTH*

THEY are not what they were, the haunts
Of long ago that I survey,
Tho' wrecking Time here hardly vaunts
A triumph of decay.

Yet all that made them homes of bliss
The more I look, the more I miss :
The loss of what I cannot name
Has left them dreary, cold, and tame.

A glow has gone that robed the sea
In glory and lit up the shore ;
A spell that lent Divinity

To Earth is now no more.

Behold the gem whose facets dance
And fire beneath the sunbeam's glance ;
The painted canvas, grey and cold,
A master hand has tinged with gold;

The stone whereout a sculptor hews
And carves an all but breathing face ;
The verse, where Genius can infuse

Poetic worth and grace !

They owe their glory to a light,
Or if you will a magic might,
Akin to that which lent me joy,
When here I wandered as a boy.

* From 'Poems of Life and Death,' p. 68.

OLD POEMS

'Twas half in me, a flame Divine
That seemed to kindle everything,
And everyone—*that* then was mine,

But now has taken wing :
And half from others—those with power
To share with me that heavenly dower
The while within their hearts it shone ;
Now *they* are vanished, it is gone.

The unillumined gem is left,
The canvas dull, the lifeless stone,
The verse prosaic : I, bereft
Of splendour, view alone
A framework spiritless and dead,
A landscape whence the soul has fled.
Yet Memory's disunited links
Are clasped thus easier, methinks.

Thus easier—for none intrude,
As I retrace the Past to round
The golden chain ; and solitude
Is mine, a holy ground :
And none can rob me of the bliss
That compensates for thoughts like this ;
Nor any heal the tender pain
Of dreaming I am young again.

TO A CHURCH CLOCK *

THE frontage of a 'high and holy Place'
Doth wear thee both in fact and figure well!
Eternity with Time upon Its face,
Perennial Truth and fleeting parable.
Here Heaven's Memorial doth fitly tell
Beholders that they cannot ever poise
The proffered Charm above the earthly spell.
The hours that leave them trifling with their toys
Are winging fast away the chance of loftier joys.

O glittering eye! art thou a basilisk,
To look us out of life? Unwearied hands
Revolving daily round a ciphered disc
Ye shame our slight of Duty's fair demands!
Unfaltering voice, thine hourly reprimands
Should quicken energy! Yet ruthless Time
Mocks many a mortal who beneath thee stands:
'Mid want and pain and care and ill and crime,
No mercy in thy stare, no pathos in thy chime?

Ah! how they differ, those who look and hear—
The laughing lad or maiden fresh from school,
The business man, the lover full of fear
Lest he should be too late, the idle fool

* From 'Poems of a Naturalist,' p. 4.

OLD POEMS

Who saunters on, to scorn parental rule,
The dainty dame, the dallying errand-boy,
The many, hot and hurried, calm and cool,
Who pass thee on the way to their employ,
The mourner in his tears, the bridegroom in his joy.

Thy gaze frets Youth with envy of ripe Age,
Thy note bids Age recall the golden Past.
We linger fondly o'er life's early page,
To skim the shadowed story at the last !
Yet hours there are with each, by gloom o'ercast,
And days that fetter all, and mock their plaint :
And one would put thee slow, another fast ;
But surly Time dishonoureth the feint ;
What dial veereth now for sinner or for saint ?

And yet a Gorgon virtue in thy look
Turns stealthily all human heat to cold :
Freezing the heart that ripples like a brook
It chills the young, it petrifies the old ;
Impassioned eyes thy tranquil face behold ;
Yet who of those that pine or thrill or moan
Dream it will look the same when all is told,
The joy, or sorrow, spent, the heart a stone,
Foes, friends and lovers dead, the care, the pain
outgrown ?

Oh, while we glance at thee with fevered eye
Sceptic that grief like ours can have a term !

HUMAN BEING

May yon Memento of Eternity,
That standeth thro' the aching ages firm
Above the charnel house and pasturing worm,
Remind us how the cruel hours are fraught
With power to teach and chasten and confirm,
That Man by Time's relentless schooling taught
May win unmouldering walls, a House Divinely
wrought.

HUMAN BEING*

WHO are we? whence? and why? No answer comes:
We ask, and peer, and probe—in vain, in vain!
We cannot win the full reply that sums
Our questioning : all never will be plain :
Earth seals her lips : Heaven's starry eyes disdain
Our suit ; and sunny glance and lovely smile
Belle the dumbness that will not explain ;
But, at the most, a wistful heart beguile
With types of rival truths they scorn to reconcile.

Yet be it ours to follow up the clue
That Heaven may drop, nor slight one hint of Earth,
Tho' we thereby but learn Man's narrow view,
And God's unbounded sweep ; His ample worth,

* From ' Poems of Life and Death,' p. 18.

OLD POEMS

Our vanity ; His fulness, and our dearth.
Each mood of Nature has a subtle power
To start some reverie—some thought of birth,
Or life, or death : no insect, bird, or flower
But can beget a dream to gild a lonely hour.

This evening from the foam of thought arose,
Like Venus, many a figure that I fain
Would mantle now in music. Sunset-rose
Had tinted mountain-torrent, shore and main,
And rocks of serpentine new washed by rain ;
Whereof shone fragments in the sand, and they
Forged the first links in Fancy's golden chain
Enwreathing Earth and Heaven ; fast fleeting Day
Forth figuring how brief is our terrestrial stay.

For what are we, the brightest and the best,
But fractions of the Infinite? our show
Of beauty but a bubble on the breast
Of a swift stream whose silvery waters flow
To an eternal Sea. Time tarrieth so,
And yet what life is longer than a tick
Of that set Clock Divinely wound to go,
Whose pendulum lags not nor moves too quick,
Gauged by Eternity's sublime arithmetic.

Our World, what is it? an enamelled field
Bedecked with lovely flowers of varying grace,
All of one growth, but each of special yield,

HUMAN BEING

This drooping Earthward, *that* with Heavenward face
Whose roots entwine, whose tendrils interlace,
Whose beauty wanes, who sink, mere annuals some,
But some, perennials of a livelier race :
Tho' all to dark mortality succumb,
These hear Spring's call to rise again, *those* find
her dumb.

What is our Being? a pellucid lake
That mirrors Nature, sparkling to the Sun
And glassing Heaven—where weary wanderers slake
Their thirst, or linger when the day is done ;
A brimming lake, our story just begun,
Whose wealth evaporates ; whose waters fail,
Yet Skyward drawn descend anew ; and won
By many a sister pool, perchance avail
To make life's history not quite an empty tale.

We beam a minute like a sudden smile
Upon Heaven's face that flashes but to fade ;
Or like the golden beam that bathes awhile
Sad Earth in beauty, fainting into shade,
Bequeathing darker gloom, yet still displayed
Behind the curtain whither it withdrew—
A shaft which from the Parent Sun had strayed
Once more embosomed, yet to earthly view
Again revealed perhaps, again to bid adieu !

OLD POEMS

Auroral lights, we paint the quiet Sky
With lambent beauty, ever and anon
From the serene horizon shooting high
And sinking, each up-flaming life soon gone,
However rare the hues wherewith it shone—
All blending in a rosy coronet
Of twilit splendour, which will linger on
When Night has veiled the starry violet
That naught in nether gloom the vision may forget.

Like sand-grains on the shore, we gleam, mid tides
Of Joy and Grief that ever ebb and flow ;
Each with a bright bequest when it subsides,
As stranded shells reflect the sunset glow.
Or as sand-ridges by their furrows shew
The drift of winds that course the wavy Deep,
So billowy Thought and Passion currents blow
Across Eternity, and as they sweep
Time's strand, all spirits sort, each in a kindred heap.

Fresh dewdrops born of Heaven and Earth's
 embrace,
Unweaned from her, to Him we owe the gleam,
To His fair risen Sun, the smile, the grace :
Each life a rounded world, by His bright beam
Illumined, glistens like a lovely dream
Of many-tinted glory, till some Ray

HUMAN BEING

Resistless, wholly from chill Earth redeem,
And we its wooing warming spell obey,
To lose our lower life in splendour of the Day.

Thin fragile reeds, we quiver to the breath
Celestial ; we murmur as they moan,
In wistful unison, ere sweeping Death,
A furious hurricane, our grace dethrone
To leave our forms dismantled, and down-blown :
Yet as the ruin startles from their lair
The herons, spirit of the sedge, up-flown
To flap majestically thro' the air,
Forthwith our franchised souls a glorious freedom
share.

Oft from one fount two brooklets bubble, both
Untainted and with flowery marge : when *this*
Seeks a low level and in turbid sloth
Meanders vilely on to the abyss.
That, clear as ever, sings in secret bliss
To blithely blend in Ocean. So it fares
With many a human twin : the life we miss
Flows high, a hidden stream all pure and fair ;
The open course befouled winds on to deep Despair.

Frail snowflakes exiled from a spotless World,
Fast wandering from a gloomy cloud Divine,
Some singly touching Earth, and some entwined,
All fraught with blessing, charged with a design

OLD POEMS

To heal and fertilize, and meant to shine,
And image purity, ere we ascend
By God's sure chemistry—how we combine
To baffle Heaven! our innocence we spend,
Our birthright pure defile, and with corruption blend!

Upon the human Tree is many a shoot
Unfolding quietly in fragrant bloom
To crown the blossom with immortal fruit ;
But interspersed with them are buds in whom
The hidden virtues find no flowering room,
And if they aim at beauty, miss the mark.
Will a more genial clime the doom avert
From them of spines, unlovely, pointed, stark?
Perchance, for white in Spring will grace the black-
thorn dark.

Like down from one old thistle, heavenly Breath
Has freed us from a common stock of Sin,
And lent us wings, and wafted us from Death,
Robed in ethereal white, as tho' akin
To Angels, that we may at least begin
A course immaculate, of soaring mirth :
Yet ah for early promise! we but win,
Like silken seeds, the barren tracks of Earth,
And vilely rooted there to evil give new birth.

Like icicles, suspended from above,
We enter being, by Earth's freezing clime
Congealed, tho' scarce unwarm from sunny Love,
And (melting into hopeful Death in time,)

HUMAN BEING

Updrawn, regain the Atmosphere sublime.
Or, shed on Earth's dark pastures, we are found,
One winter morning, like the frosty rime ;
Alas! too little like the Manna round
The Camp, that Angels spared to strew the desert
ground.

Ungrateful brood, we foul our mansion fair
And leave a legacy of slime behind us :
The graceless grub defiles the plum or pear
That bore and bred it ; so sweet Earth that shrined us
Unthankfully we spoil ; and lusts so blind us
That we but half repent. God's Handspun Globe
Is by our Race corroded : He may find us
Now marring His fair mantle, if He probe ;
As moth-eggs vitalized, will fret their cradling robe.

Like pearls, each prisoned in a private shell
And born in evil all, we gleam awhile
With futile radiance, till the opening cell
Admit a Hand to free from bondage vile,
To purify from aught that may defile,
And thread for glory each in his due place,
A flawless human chain, to beam and smile,
'Mid Heaven's regalia, tokens of the Grace
That fashioned for Delight our gloom-encircled Race.

As from yon tranquil Sea two clouds arise
To freshen Earth, and yet perchance with wrecks
To strew the shore, so dost thou haunt our skies,
Triplet with Birth and Death, mysterious Sex,

OLD POEMS

Eternal healer born, awhile to vex!
Two thunderous mortals, full charged with thy
madness,

Approach and clash, once faint and dreamy specks
On Life's horizon, soon to blend in gladness,
Yet shedding ruin oft, and ere refreshment, sadness.

Enough I now have sung, enough almost
Of Human Being, in the retrospect
Of that fair sweep of sungilt Sky, Earth, Coast,
And Sea, and vagrant fancies that collect
Round lofty themes : but stay ! I recollect
A group there, who, young, middle-aged, and hoary,
Conversed, and sang gay glees that nightfall checked :
So let me image ere I end my story
A figure multiform from their melodious glory.

Clear accents from the voice of God we sound
Divinely, and with fainting echoes sink
Into dark silence : uttered to expound
Eternal Truth, behold in each a link
Of the colloquial chain : what He may think,
Is heard thro' human channels manifold !
While mortals congregate upon the brink
Of the cloud-curtained Deep, His Tale is told
In lovely music thro' the lives of young and old.

Yet more than accents sounding but to fade,
Mere notes that blend in one harmonious tale,
The very thoughts of that deep Mind who bade

LIMITATIONS

Creation be, are all that seem to fail,
Tho' they in truth but quit a mansion frail.
Stray fugitives of Time, we shall be sought
And found again! No whirlwind could prevail
To sweep from Being, what that Mind has wrought,
E'en human Memory will register all thought.

O Mind, O Memory, Divine! Rest we
In Thy fair keeping, we returning pure
From Earth's defilement : be our Destiny,
Not ever and anon to live—secure
At least of that—but always to endure !
Immortal concepts, haunting memories
In Thee reposing, each a miniature
Of Thine Eternal Word till Thou despise
His Image, none who wears that glorious Likeness
dies !

LIMITATIONS*

THOU cravest sympathy ? Yet never think
'Twill waft thee past the brink
Of the dark gulf that parts
The mysteries of even wedded hearts :
Love's magic spell no potency imparts
That solemn deep to bridge ;
It can but guide them up to linger at the ridge.

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 13.

OLD POEMS

And there they peer at vision's utmost bourn,
Both, baffled and forlorn,
From each opposing height,
A peak, beyond which yawns the Infinite.
No Pisgah with the Promised Land in sight,
Till sadly they retreat
To that unshadowed plain where thoughts and
feelings meet.

For there they think awaits them one sweet joy
No distance could destroy,
No sundering delay—
The happiness of mutual display
And blending, in the spirits' ~~dismay~~ ^{array} ;
Yet is it really so ?
We who have lingered long must sadly murmur, 'No.'

Mid solitary acres may be found
One rood of common ground,
One happy trysting-place
Where hot emotions rushing in embrace
To fondly mingle for a little space :
And Earth has naught of bliss
Compared with what is born of interflow like this.

But back upon the ever lonely plain
We seek to blend in vain ;
And things that flame one breast
Chill like spent embers fallen from the rest :

LIMITATIONS

Few glowing thoughts and fancies when confessed
Meet with responsive fire ;
So private is all dream, creation and desire !

Too secret are delight, and grief, and gloom
For Truth to find full room
How oft we talk and smile,
Yet feel we skate upon thin ice the while :
Anon the plunge—and rescued lips beguile
The hour that promised fair
For weighty fond converse, with trifles light as air.

We reason, too, and wage a war of words,
Loud as the strife of birds
That on grey autumn eves
Hold shrill discussion 'mid the fading leaves ;
But do we argue for what each believes ?
Nay ; rampant 'mid the tide
Of repartee are selfsufficiency and pride.

And there are things whereof the shy heart dreams,
Unutterable themes,
Shunned skilfully by each
Amid the eddying of that stream of speech,
Like half-hid boulders in a brooklet's reach
Round which the waters swirl,
To ripple blithely on at once in silvery purl.

OLD POEMS

Oh for the ampler Life to come that lends
A finer sense to friends,
An insight keen and true,
To pierce each other's being thro' and thro'!
For then I doubt not to their ravished view
Undreamt of wealth will shew
That each has dwarfed and wronged the other
here below.

THE NIGHTINGALE'S MISSION*

IT flashes back to me, a Dream forgot!
When heavenward rapt, I heard celestial Tones
Bid radiant seraphs quit their dazzling thrones
And mask their glory, for an earthly lot,
In forms Protean, with sweet notes as polyglot,
And modes and means as manifold,
As wistful mortals, young and old,
Desire, demand, or need—a gracious plot
To win them back to Beauty, Love,
Truth, Virtue, and a Home above.
Each angel, with peculiar grace,
Sang his own music while he vanished into space.

* From 'Poems of Life and Death,' p. 13, where this song is entitled 'Ode to a Nightingale.'

THE NIGHTINGALE'S MISSION

Of all the Songs that then enchanted me, the best
Is that which thrills me now : could aught arise
From echoing Earth more lovely to the Skies,
More apt to win and woo a rebel breast?
No need for thee to change thine accents like the rest!

 In that fair Dream I was forbidden
 To view thee, and thou here art hidden,
Divinely meek and so not manifest.
 Too dearly should I purchase sight,
 The price would be the sudden flight
 Of but a dusky bird, I know ;
For seraphs who have left that Mansion veil their
 glow.

Yet vainly veil their presence : all around
Must feel that Heaven has sent thee here to sing,
And signalled ' Silence ! ' for no living thing
Of all now marshalled upon tree or ground
Will move, or violate by voice the virgin sound.
 Bat, owl, and night-jar hold their peace,
 Beech, elm and oak their whisper cease ;
With lilies in the lanes around,
 Sweet eglantine, and snowy May :
 While flowers that face the sunny ray,
 With heads now drooping down the incense
 yield
Of humble worshippers in garden, grove and field.

OLD POEMS

Still hide thee, tuneful one, lest vision mar
Thy rippling magic ! may this roving eye
What else it can in yon dim dell descry,
Nor miss the dreamy moon, the evening star :
And let the sense that thrills to perfume now unbar
 Its portal to the vesper balm :
 My ear alone be thine to charm ;
And be Earth's discord impotent to jar
 Upon the melody that brings
 So rich a foretaste of high things
 That I now covet the fair Place
Where Love and Virtue reign, and Truth, and
 faultless Grace.

Yet warble on, nor deem thy mission done,
For children wander near thee, city-bred !
Thro' bloom and bramble by the music led,
Yongg feet are fettered now, for all their fun.
The twilight melts in gloom, and yet a golden sun
 On memory's horizon gleams,
 To rise upon their rosy dreams
Nor haply set before life's day be done.
 See how they drop their dewy flowers,
 The spoil of happy rambling-hours
 And thread the thorny maze, to tell
In many a squalid court that magic haunts the dell !

A lurking thief thy pain and passion hears
While waiting for a shadowed moon ; and lo !

THE NIGHTINGALE'S MISSION

The felon eyes are lit up with the glow
Of early innocence, that guilty years
Had rudely stolen, robbing them of tears.
 Clouds gather, yet no sound is heard
 But thine evangel, blessed bird !
The strange unearthly tones have quelled his fears,
 To flush the face with waking shame
 And palsy the purloining aim.
 Ah! hymn thy gospel till the morn
Uncurtain sustenance for Right and Hope reborn.

Within the thicket lovers have crept near.
Who mid the flowery solitude keep tryst,
And in the gloom secure have fondly kissed.
Trill on, that pining passion may reverse
The human sanctities, and honour grow more dear!
 See mid the labyrinth they linger,
 Each pausing with uplifted finger,
The while (as sunbeams thro' a mist appear)
 Pure heavenly Love shoots golden rays
 Unveiling vapoury sense from haze,
 And spirits thrill, to touch and blend
And soar aloft as thine ethereal strains ascend.

Two rustics, from the field returning late,
Mute by yon hedge, do homage to the sense
Of beauty scorned before : and thro' the dense
Embowering foliage peer, with heart elate,

OLD POEMS

Pale city-toilers, whose pent spirits find the gate
To freedom thro' thine ecstasy:
A dreamy maiden hovers nigh,
Whose haunting thirst thy crystal notes abate,
Each silvery cadence as the sound
Of raindrops on a fevered ground :
A weeping one uplifts her cross,
And thro' thine anguish half forgets a bitter loss.

Nay, weary not, since virtue to assuage
Our grief is thus distilling from thy strain,
And we who also warble, not in vain
Thro' thee, tell out our passion, mirth and rage !
A prima donna now who hurries to the stage
Hails thee as tutor to impart
Thy spell to her enchanting art.
A poet whom high reveries engage
Will mantle them in richer song,
And charm a more fastidious throng ;
While girls who emulate thy trill
Might capture listening hearts, without their
wonted skill.

Thus, if my Dream be true, fulfil thy task,
Secure that He Who missioned thee will waft
Thy melody, and wing each tuneful shaft
Home to its destiny ere thou unmask,

THE NIGHTINGALE'S MISSION

And soaring Godward, in thy native glory bask!
 Meanwhile, a mortal, be thou blest
 With yon sweet dingle, fairy nest
And gentle mate, and all thy heart can ask;
 And many a tender moonlit eve
 My bliss shall be to hear thee grieve
 And chide and agonize and joy
Till Heaven from Earth thro' thee my ravished
 soul decoy.

OXFORD IN RETROSPECT*

S MILES are thy due, thou haunt of happy years,
 Nay, ringing laughter over bygone mirth!
How comes it that I hardly check the tears
That rise unbidden while I sing thy worth?
Oh! thou art with the things that could not last:
Home rapture, nursery joy, school sunlit woe,
And many more, which the unyielding Past
Restores to naught but hallowing Memory:
And thou art mantled in such tender glow
Thro' her soft charm; and my dear days with thee
Look so divine that I play truant mid my glee.

* From 'Music from the Maze,' p. 147.

OLD POEMS

For oft my heart doth wander from the throng,
The merry scenes that I recall so well,
To muse on graver ones; some that belong
To thee, and some begotten of a spell
Of gloom that shadowed half the hours of gold.
Too oft I dream o'er some death-silenced tone
That lent a glory to that chime of old,
Or some warm heart that distance doth estrange.
Shine out, fair City, that to thee back flown,
While o'er thine unforgotten joys I range,
My happy music may no more to sadness change !

If memory sweep a finished life, I think
Two spots will claim the tenderest regard—
One is the place of birth, that golden link
With ante-natal being ; so I guard
Devoutly in my heart thy terraced lawn
And ample portico, and gabled eaves,
Shy Worcester, my first mansion in the dawn
Of cloistered being ! The enchanted scene
Mine eyes first lit upon mid April leaves
And music, tho' millenniums intervene
Were hallowed as thy Fane, and as thy garden green !

And then if after-life should all be spent
Within one home, that were the other spot.
I but a babe in college-being bent
My steps to thee, and shared thine honoured lot,
Grey Merton (whom I glory to call mine!).

OXFORD IN RETROSPECT

To blend awhile in cloistered harmony
With shy philosopher and sage divine.
Firstborn of many sisters, archetype
Art thou of that calm agapemone
Where tutors train the thoughtless and unripe
Kind to their folly, tho' they dance not to their pipe.

Smile on me, Merton, as thou oft hast done
When (backward gazing from a primrose plain,
Or cowslip mead, or violet vale), the sun
Gilding thy distant tower had made me feign
My flowery walk to be the cultured way
Whereof my sojourn in thee was the start !
Or when, a hill surmounted, the soft ray
That gilt thy pinnacles hath woke the thought
That save for thee I had not climbed : my heart
Before I knew thee hardly cared for aught
Of what I reach to now, by grand tradition taught !

But in a life reviewed (as when the eye
Star-gazing rests on worlds that look more bright
Than many round them in the violet sky)
We single out some mansions of delight ;
So doth enchanting Magdalen now share
My heart with Christ Church, Trinity and New,
And lettered Balliol, nor can I forbear
A tender backward glance at Oriel,
And calm sequestered Corpus : and I view

OLD POEMS

All Souls and Wadham with regard as well ;
While round me fair St. John's hath wove a magic
spell.

And if the eye of memory do not stray
So oft perhaps to Pembroke's ivied quad,
Or view the chestnuts by the shadowed way
To black old Brasenose I oft have trod,
If Hertford, Jesus, Lincoln, Exeter,
St. Edmund Hall, or Keble, and, tho' last,
Yet rightly foremost, ancient Univ. stir
My spirit less in retrospect, be sure
It is not that my love for them is past.
Ah no ! around the rest a richer store
Of reminiscence clings, and thus they haunt me
more.

Bid me now dream of thee as a bright whole,
Dear Oxford, dual in thy loveliness,
A form that fitly shrines a twofold soul
(The measure of thy health and usefulness),
One that befits thy genius : grey and green—
Grey as thy centuries of hoary Time,
Thy doctors with their venerable mien,
Thy long tradition, and old classic lore—
Green as the fresh hearts in their youthful prime,
Who star the quad or through the gateway pour,
Bent on new rivalry in cricket, ball, and oar.

OXFORD IN RETROSPECT

I fondly love that form! the time-worn look
Is precious as my mother's aged brow ;
The lines and furrows live in memory's book
As in her portrait that I gaze on now.
The fretted stonework, battlements and spires,
Are as her lines of character, or those
That tell of triumph over youthful fires
And point to calm above and Heavenly joy ;
The chiming bells are as the tones that rose
From her dear lips to teach me, when a child,
And warn me when from Right I else had been
beguiled.

No less I linger o'er thy youthful guise,
The freshness of thy grace, the scanty robe
Of vivid spring that summer amplifies.
Thy garden-secrets was I wont to probe,
The flowery labyrinth, the leafy gloom :
Thy terraced groves were my perennial haunt.
As one admires a lady's youthful bloom,
First, all enchanted me, and then, each trait,
For learning soon to love her, he will vaunt
Half-hidden charms unfolding day by day,
As he begins to know each turn and mode and way.

Let them examine me who know thee best,
In garden-lore, and I will point them out
Each evergreen wherein shy blackbirds nest,
Each tree from which the happy thrushes shout,

OLD POEMS

The robin's haunt, the redstart's ivied wall,
The undergrowth of the sweet nightingale ;
And every warbler's note would I recall,
For they are as the varied voice to me
Of silver-throated love : nor would I fail
To tell each golden butterfly and bee,
And every honied flower that yields them jubilee.

But the beloved form of old or young
Is dear by reason of the soul within.
By none, methinks, hath thine been duly sung,
Mother of many bards ! Who dares to win
So difficult a laurel ? My meek muse
Would press a reverent finger on her lip :
Yet a brief tribute will she not refuse
To thee, thou best of Universities !
Thy heart is with the goodly fellowship
Of lofty things : Breath from the glowing skies
Inspires thee for thy work, thine aim and enterprise.

True to thy motto, lit up by the Lord,
The outflow of thine inner fount of life
Like Eden's fourfold river, doth afford
Fertility for man : the rippling strife
Of thine activity is gilt by beams
Of Heavenly sunshine ; our low-lying land
Is blest by thine invigorating streams.
' Mesopotamia ' is our Britain : thine
Are the fresh rivulets on every hand

OXFORD IN RETROSPECT

That bid it blossom and bear fruit Divine,
And for whose living power both Heaven and
Earth combine.

But let me to my simile return :
Thy soul is dual as thy form—both age
And youth in her employment I discern ;
Thine ancient lore, thy classic heritage,
That grand apotheosis of the Past,
And inspiration from a faded heaven,
The immemorial things thou holdest fast,
Thy calm routine, and self-complacent round
Betoken hoary age ; and yet the leaven
Of youthful ferment in thee oft hath crowned
With triumph due reform whereon dull age hath
frowned.

O that the battle between age and youth
Within thy soul were to more purpose fought—
More in the cause of Virtue, Right, and Truth,
And less for antique subtleties of thought !
The time-worn love of ease and indolence
That turns full half the year to holiday
Doth hardly chime with modern view and sense ;
And if it did, 'tis thine to lead and teach,
To set the time, to be before the day,
Ay, and to bring within the common reach
The hidden lights of Thought, of Art, of Song, of
Speech.

OLD POEMS

Builder of poets' sepulchres ! thy Trust
Claims honour for the living, not neglect.
What ! lift dead reputations from the dust,
And leave those born of thee to disrespect
Nay, let one seer or thinker miss his due.
Would any wither like a sunless flower
If men could in thy light his merit view ?
A singer perish out of Oxford ? No,
It cannot be ! Yet has she not the power
To bid exotics that delight her blow
Within a garden fair, kissed by a golden glow.

Rightly we rise to our ancestral claim :
Doth not thy motto mission thee to much
Which to neglect would mar thy Christian fame ?
To renovate the Dogma out of touch
With what to-day's large outlook reckons Truth
Thou art equipped ; for scrutiny and change
And power to shape anew belong to youth,
While in thine age is the conserving hold.
For this the Oxford in our Church might range
The tales by Science and the Bible told,
To charm the truant creeds back to the ancient Fold.

And then thy giant power thou couldst employ
To stay the tide whose flow doth shame our day,
Whelming the landmarks between man and boy,
And Right and Wrong—the strife in empty play
That wastes the ardour meant to move mankind ;

OXFORD IN RETROSPECT

The love of sport which agonizes those
Dumb lives wherewith our own are intertwined.
The lust for War, that can but keep alive
The doomed distinction between friends and foes.
Teacher of Truth ! if Englishmen must strive,
Fire them with holy zeal that none of these survive !

Throned on the shore of Culture and true Thought
Play King Canute to the fast-rising tide,
And watching Britons shall be timely taught
And the rude waves retire for all their pride !
They will not scorn thee if He be thy Light
And Strength, Who never can be disobeyed,
Who saith to seas that mock a monarch's might
' Thus far, no further shall ye go ; for here
At My command, shall your proud waves be stayed.'
Then, too, within the academic sphere
Should not high Honour bid one blot quite
disappear ?

Doth it beseem thy chivalry of old,
Thy vaunted logic, that the weaker sex
(Whom now thy grace or justice doth enfold)
Should run an equal race to find that checks,
On them alone, bar out the winner's prize ?
Oh ! doth it need a high prophetic gift,
An outlook keen to mark the twilit rise
Of Woman ? Be it as a sun to gild
Our dawning day, or as a moon to lift

OLD POEMS

Themists wherewith our night had else been filled—
Her inequality of lot is nigh fulfilled.

But hold! the Nemesis of all who dream
Hath followed me, and stopped the clock of Time.
The Oxford of my day hath been the theme
Too largely of my over daring rhyme.
Should I forget how nobly thou since then
Hast risen to thy Heaven-born destiny?
But doth the skylark choose his music when
He soars? tho' dropped to earth he may recall
Some cadence as unworthy of the sky:
That do I now—and yet perchance not all
The burden of my song is wild or whimsical.

But even so, the magic Memory weaves
Is over thee, fair Oxford! charm and grace
Of all that may have marred them she bereaves.
The lines of beauty on full many a face
I now recall, but hardly one defect.
The faults, I have forgotten, in the soul
Of each I loved; the spell I recollect—
The virtues, and the fascinating ways.
So linger with me thou—a varied whole
Toned down and softened by a hallowing haze,
Thou summer-misted dream, thou haunt of golden
rays!

TO A HEDGE-SPARROW

How can error live so long?
They who named have done thee wrong.
What! a sparrow trill a song
With so sweet a story,
Or begin the nest I view
Half complete, of tender hue,
Fit ere long for eggs of blue
In a hedgerow hoary—

Hoary yet with rime of March,
Stiff from winter's lingering starch,
Mid the winds that check the larch
From a flowerage rosy,
Icy streams, and leaden sky,
Woods unpurpled, violets shy,
Joy! some poetry to spy
In a clime so prosy ;

Joy! a minstrel true to hear,
Able to revive and cheer,
Chaucer mid an England drear,
Herald bard, and mentor ;
Chanter in Earth's Temple vast,
Treble scarce by one surpassed,
Chorister the first and last,
Nay ordained Precentor !

OLD POEMS

Holy Orders must be thine,
When such gentle arts combine
With a carol so divine ;

 Nearer they impel me,
Now a flutter of the wing
Mounts thee on a stall to sing
Secrets from the heart of spring.
 What hast thou to tell me ?

‘ Homely music counts for more
Than the tones from a far shore.
Heartfelt melody may pour
 From a minstrel dusky.
Mid the choral silence oft
Come my notes from spray or croft,
Jubilant, tho’ hardly soft,
 Weak but never husky.

‘ Lonely life is not the best,
Early mated, early blest ;
Comfort centres in the nest,
 If true love be burning.
Fortune smiles on none who mope,
March can find full room for hope ;
Faith uplifts a telescope,
 April near discerning.

‘ If the architect be skilled,
All the dream may be fulfilled.
Since I delicately build

LOVE'S DAY-DREAM

Now, by none defeated,
Mid green fields and glowing skies
Beauty may, with ravished eyes,
Bending down, award the prize
To my plan completed.'

LOVE'S DAY-DREAM*

As the glow of matin skies
Fires the dell and tints the lea ;
Sunshine from thine opening eyes
Floods my heart with golden glee.

Lightly shed, and quickly gone,
May thy tears like early showers,
Freshening what they fall upon,
Star it with unfolding flowers.

Let thy gaze at dreamy noon
Quench despair and quicken mirth ;
As the heavenly blue of June
Sheds meridian joy on earth.

Gladdened thus, be thine the calm
In the afternoon of all ;
Softening into vesper psalm,
Folded flowers and twilight fall.

* From 'Music from the Maze,' p. 80.

OLD POEMS

But before yon eyes retire
Underneath their lovely veil,
Dart a sunset-glance to fire
Every heart—hill, grove and dale.

Earth can cry herself to sleep,
As the dewy dark doth prove :
Hearts at nightfall cannot weep
If new dawn awake new love.

POST-MORTEM *

IF after the change that unfetters the soul
I were free to return for a day of the Time
I now deem of such little account, on parole,
To be back before Midnight should tell out her
chime.

Enlightened of Paradise, how would I spend
The moments, in view of each broken earth link,
With power to impress upon all, foe or friend,
Good and evil my being and will? Let me think!

Would I seek to revive the old care and delight,
Living over again the gay smile and sad tear?
What use? Would the tender Time-chain re-unite?
Who, what—could now vary one dear vanished year?

* From 'Music from the Maze,' p. 72.

POST-MORTEM

Behind would I leave the immutable Past,
And try to transfigure the wrong that must stop;
Or from the decay of the fruit that it cast,
Engender, like Nature, a new happy crop.

I would hold in contempt what on Earth is our boast,
And vaunt the true value of what we despise:
And if at my will men could see me, the ghost
Of what they once knew should oft steal on their eyes.

What for? that, like Hamlet, survivors may learn
To avenge me of wrong in the body? Not so.
Should men thro' my spectre, like Banquo's discern
The one who in life had most injured me? No.

Full fraught with delight from the shadowless shore,
My spirit would scatter rare gifts while it sped;
Like a lovely spring gale sweeping on with a store
Of beauty and life for the dark and the dead.

As a bright girl who visits a city of woe,
Bringing sweet country-freshness to squalor and need,
Its light would bequeath an ineffable glow,
An aroma of grace from its calm would proceed.

High hope and resolve would be brought to the birth,
In the heart of calm sleepers o'er whom it might pause;
As a warm spell of sunshine will leave wintry earth
Quick with impulse, whereof one bright hour is
the cause.

OLD POEMS

Would it in the dark graveyard or avenue lurk
To wantonly frighten the foolish and vain?
Or to startle the early afoot for their work,
Would it steal on their notice in some twilit lane?

Ah! no; a white sign-post at Life's parting ways,
It might linger in metaphor, hardly in fact—
To waken men's feelings, not creep on their gaze,
Save where thus alone it could stay a vile act.

At morn, it should quicken the priest to uphold
The Truth, and the lawyer the Right to maintain;
Check the banker and broker from worshipping gold,
And the shopman from bartering honour for gain.

And would-be deceivers should pause thro' its charm,
And tears in some penitent eyes should upwell;
The felon in gaol should repent of his harm,
And Heaven should welcome the truant from hell.

At noon, in the garden, or mid the gay parks,
The lounge should thrill, and the libertine quake;
Mute spirits upsoaring should carol like larks,
And prayer from the deep of dumb hearts should
outbreak.

And in the dark hospital patients should feel,
From its spell that an angel was hovering round,
As if through the chink of a dungeon should steal
A pure sunbeam to smile mid the darkness that
frowned.

POST-MORTEM

And in the soft gloaming when lovers entwine,
It should hallow the cornfield, the stile and the grove,
And the nightingale's music should sound more
divine

Thro' its charm, as fond hearts grew diviner in love.
If in the grey churchyard fresh tears should bedew
The wreath that a lonely one lays on a tomb;
A vision unearthly should flash on her view,
And flowers of new hope in her spirit should bloom.
It should linger at night by a dear dreamer's bed,
Who, wrapped in soft slumber, might feel it was near;
And waking should gaze on the form of the dead,
To win some sweet token of love, without fear.

One day of the thousand unvalued in life—
O the harvest of glory from that to be gleaned!
The comfort and calm to be shed on its strife;
The hearts from its evil and wrong to be weaned!
Twice twelve of the hours within which may be
wrought

Such marvels of mercy, and goodness, and grace!
Too brief—yet, believe me, some wealth will be
brought

To the Eden above when the way I retrace.

Back gazing from Paradise, many a thorn
In the exile of Earth, will look mantled in white:
On many a thistle, keen, angry and lorn,
Imperial purple will bloom in delight.

TO A CHAFFINCH*

‘FRINGILLA CŒLEBS’†—they who styled
Thee that were probably beguiled
By what they witnessed in a wild
And wintry season,
When males, by ne’er a mate enthralled,
Fed blithely mid the cattle stalled ;
But thee a bachelor they called,
With scanty reason.

Unwedded ? no, aflame to pair
In spring, if later loath to share
The fortunes of thy consort fair
In barn, or bevy.
A chainless rover thou, perchance
Too trim and sprightly, a free lance,
A gallant met at every dance,
And rout, and levee.

And men can walk, and women sit,
Uncharmed while forms so exquisite
Mid garden, lane and meadow flit,
Coquette, and warble !

* From ‘Poems of Life and Death,’ p. 115.

† The Latin name for this bird, which means ‘the bachelor finch.’

TO A CHAFFINCH

A few fond children of the Earth
And Sky can value Nature's worth :
The crowd prefer wealth, comfort, mirth,
Or Fashion's bauble.

'Twere better far for thee to hide,
Than let Spring's glory, Summer's pride,
And Winter's vaunt, unnoticed glide

Before our vision :

If rarer, we with ravished eyes
Might deem thee truant from the skies,
A sprite in feathery disguise
From fields Elysian.

If tinted skies could lend a flush,
A rainbow delicately brush,
A rill impart its silvery rush,
Thine were the dowry !

The magic of that cadence brings
Before me long-forgotten things,
Moss lichen'd nests, shy startled wings,
Haunts green and flowery ;

Sad Autumn roads begilt by sight
Of thee at banquet, or in flight ;
Bleak shivering moors whereon would light
One form undreary ;

Farmyards where mid the flock upflown
I recognised thy mode and tone ;
Spring orchards, and from some pink throne
Thy carol cheery.

OLD POEMS

Blithe bird, I am a boy to-day ;
The rapture of life's lovely May
Thrills thro' me listening to thy lay,
 And upward glancing !
The world is mine with Love and ~~Peace~~^{Love},
And distant far, ~~their~~^{life's} flickering flame,
Satiety, an outlook tame,
 And Death advancing.

TO THE WOOD-SORREL

I N a ballroom oft a face,
 Innocent of Evil's trace,
Laughs with such a winning grace,
None could fail to love it :
In a gallery may hide
One sweet thing worth all beside
Which, tho' ignorance deride,
Men of taste will covet.

Such a face and such a thing
Charms me in the early spring,
While the thrush and blackbird sing
Praise for winter's ending,
When for migrant notes I list,
Where the forest trees have kissed,
In a green and purple mist
Oaks and beeches blending.

TO THE WOOD-SORREL

Nature's ball be yon expanse
Where the blossoms wave and dance,
To the rambler keen of glance,
While the breeze is blowing ;
Nature's gallery, the aisle
Tapestried with flowers, where smile
Pictures with half-hidden guile,
Innocently growing.

Ball and gallery may vaunt
Both, that they enshrine the haunt
Where thy gentle glories daunt
Moody April's changes.
In a glade beside the stream
Moss beset, the white bells gleam ;
On the tender sward they teem
In dark forest-ranges.

Flowers have chained my heart ere now,
But alas ! for broken vow,
I unloosed the links when thou
On the wind didst tremble.
They had done their best to woo,
And had won my homage too ;
Traitor then, what could I do,
But awhile dissemble ?

Let the sylvan rivals shine,
Crowfoot, primrose, celandine,
Violets their heads incline,
Vain be now the wooing !

OLD POEMS

Vain as when bright jealous girls
Bend blue eyes and golden curls
Tearfully on truant churls,
Fairer loves pursuing ;

Vain as artists' toil to lure,
Who, Fame's darlings, can secure
Ample view, yet hear obscure
Paintings more belauded ;
Vain be every stratagem,
Thou the fairest, each a gem,
Thine, of right, the diadem
To the best awarded !

Gazing down on thee I view
Leaves trefoil, of twofold hue,
Purple side for evening ~~dew~~^{dew}
Green for noon unshaded ;
Trembling ~~on~~ an ecstatic poise
All athirst for freshening joys,
Each a sheltering dower employs,
Or thy charm had faded.

Ay, and blooms amid them blow
Pure as spotless Alpine snow,
Tinged with rosy after-glow
In the twilight tender :
Lilac-veined as her soft hand
Who perhaps, when they expand,
Picks them for the girdle band
Of a waist too slender :

TO THE WOOD-SORREL

Chaste as his desire who feeds
With the spoil of woods and meads
Love's first flame, who looks, and reads
In a glance affection :
Calm, too, as the pulseless rest
Of a sleeper, on whose breast
Snowy wreaths are lightly pressed,
Pledge of Resurrection.

Lovely floweret, so entwined
With each image that the mind
Fashions of our changeful kind,
Quit my memory never !
There, all sacred to thy worth,
Lives, coeval with the birth
Of our love, a slope of earth
Beautified for ever.

Spring will wane, and summer's shade
End in autumn's bare arcade,
But the splendour of my glade
Tells a changeless story,
Bright as orient legend told ;
Leaves bedeck it flashing gold,
Throning petals manifold,
One wild maze of glory !

TO A PAIR OF REDSTARTS*

By the park-paling, long
Fettered by form and song,
Linger I, watching your elegant ways.
Who with a tuneful heart
Could from the spell depart
Dumb as yon kine that unheedingly graze?
Questions disturb my mind—
Have all the bards been blind?
Why has your eulogy never been sung?
Shall I the wrong redress?
Heaven and Earth whisper, 'Yes.'
Fire in the heart will flame forth in the tongue.
Seldom does Nature dower
Brightness with tuneful power;
Here she has married soft music and hue!
All of her best she spent,
While she divinely blent
Both in a harmony rivalled by few.
Beautiful flies and bees
Float by in golden ease,
None vies so well with the setting of green:
Doves deeper tones exchange,
Thrushes have loftier range,
None, to my ear, matches more with the scene.

* From 'Lyrical Studies,' p. 116.

TO A PAIR OF REDSTARTS

Shame them, thou gorgeous male!
Quiver that fiery tail,
Vaunt thy blue back, velvet throat, and white brow;
Warble a lovely strain,
Sally forth once again!
Boldly I ask, what can rival thee now?
Show me a lovelier sight
Than thy quick wavy flight,
Edging the cover to light on the fence;
Dipping with fairy grace
Soon, a stray fly to chase,
Poised for a moment in airy suspense!
Whence the desire to screen?
Why set the boughs between
Me and thy beauty when flitting away?
Is it a safety charm?
Who would such splendour harm?
Death were the due of a fiend who could slay.
Ah! 'tis not I alone
Gender that plaintive tone,
Those blithe excursions from paling and tree:
'Tis Love's appeal so meek;
Passion's coy hide and seek;
Thou who hast fettered, thyself art not free!
She who has forged thy chain,
What if her guise be plain?
Sharing thy fervour to thee she is heaven!

OLD POEMS

Earth holds no richer wealth
Than the view won by stealth,
Or the chase round the bush seventy times seven.

Play out the merry game!
Flicker like tongues of flame,
Spare, while I watch, no coquetry or lure!
Whirl away like the wind,
She with a glance behind,
Thou, all ablaze to regain and secure!

Now be fair Fortune's hour!
While the green park ye scour,
Love's drunken zealots, each maddened by each,
Let me one furtive glance
Give into what sly Chance
Bade me take note had been wrought within reach.

As a loose stone I lift
Up from an ivied rift,
Lo! a rare sight worth a trudge for a mile;
Five azure glories rest
Warm in a hair-lined nest;
Fresh as green earth and blue ocean they smile.

Fiery ones now, I leave
Lest flitting back ye grieve
Marking me near, that your haunt is discerned:
Summer delight fulfil,
Vanish at autumn chill,
When the wild winter is over, return!

A PARADOX

TILL Memory die one place I shun,
Yet while she lives it is the one
Where brightest hours are passed :
The scene where life's best tale was told
I never would again behold ;
Yet there I linger as of old,
And haunt it to the last.

You ask me why and how? A boy,
In it I won and squandered joy,
Proved hope, and gauged despair.
It teems with many a vanished face,
A spent delight, a withered grace,
A charm still hovering, whose chase
Once conquered grief and care.

To view it now were but to vex
Fond eyes with vision of sad wrecks,
Dark ruin, faded flowers.
To buds of white, and bells of blue,
Ere autumn-fall we bid adieu !
The shore where summer breezes blew
Is not for wintry hours.

Yet in whose brain-world lives there not
A glittering sea, a fairy spot,
A paradise of song ?

OLD POEMS

'Tis such a haunt that I frequent ;
'Tis there the golden hours are spent,
For there mid music, bloom, and scent
Smile an immortal throng !

With them, 'tis always summer, wealth,
Hope, beauty, happiness and health,
Flood tide, bright sun, full moon !
No thunder cloud, no stormy wind,
Disturb that azure of the mind ;
No frown, no word or look unkind
Distract that soul commune.

And here when trouble, pain, or strife
O'ershadow home, or darken life,
I in a moment go.
Calm Memory that smooths the years
Till all the roughness disappears,
Strong Will that bars the rebel tears,
To you this heaven I owe !

TO A FLOCK OF GOLDFINCHES

BALMY gale, beaming sun,
Ye my true thanks have won
In that this throng to my meadow has sped !
Lured, by the breezy glow,
Here where the thistles blow,
See how my airy guests settle and spread !

TO A FLOCK OF GOLDFINCHES

Children of summer cheer,
Fresh from the orchard near,
Welcome a thousand times to my domain !
Would ye my heart beguile,
Stay as ye are awhile,
Ere ye are off on the zephyr again !

Pause, gentle wind, I pray,
Fade not, resplendent ray,
Blend in soft union, kind elements all !
Painters look here, and blush,
Turn from your tint and brush,
Own ye are mastered, and yield to the thrall !

Beauty has played her last !
O'er so divine a cast
Nature leans breathless, and Art shall be mute.
Lo ! what a winning grace,
Golden wings, ruby face,
Form like a fairy, and tone like a lute.

Sevenfold, this flutters round,
Seven-tongued the accents sound !
If from my orchard they borrowed that hue,
Apple, pear, plum, and peach,
Shamed not the tint of each
Rapturous ranger that over them flew !

Two to a thistle cling ;
Claw, bill, and golden wing,
Leaguing to shed the plumed seeds o'er the down :

OLD POEMS

As fickle girls defame
Some fair empurpled name,
Soiled in the gossip that flies thro' the town.

Two on a plantain stalk
Twitter in tuneful talk,
All the while stripping the stem of its wealth ;
As the quack doctors meet
Oft, and consulting, cheat
Some slender patient of money and health.

One, on a groundsel perched,
Right to the core has searched,
Wafting the down on the midsummer air :
As when a sage or bard
Over a problem hard,
Frees the white fancies that float everywhere.

Two on vile weeds are pitched,
Unsullied from the ditch,
By the rank venomous nettles unstung ;
Like wilful maids who pore
Over unhealthy lore,
Scatheless, because they are pure-souled and young.

Listen ! a footstep light
Sends them in wavy flight :
Joy ! they curve back, to re-settle methinks :
As when a train of thought
By a rare fancy wrought
Soon reunites, if noise scatter the links.

TO A FLOCK OF GOLDFINCHES

Restless ones never still !
Whence is the patient skill
Spent on your orchard home shapely and soft ?
Whence is the captive toil
Shewn at their beck who spoil
Infinite grace to imprison you oft ?
Why did the myth of yore
Link you with Him who bore,
Patient mid agony, sin's awful due ?
What tutored Art to paint
Angel and martyred saint
Leagued in a suffering communion with you ?
Is it that bliss and pain
Thro' Him are joined again,
Long disunited by Evil's low creed ?
Is it that Life's true wealth,
Liberty, beauty, health,
Proffer their best for humanity's need ?
Is it that grace of Earth,
Form, colour, music, mirth,
Kinship can claim with the fairest of Heaven ?
Is it that light shall stream
From the pure Sevenfold Beam
Brighter than aught from yon golden-winged seven ?
Is it—but ah ! ye rise,
Scorning all save the Skies :
Leave my heart there even tho' ye descend !

OLD POEMS

Mine, the pure Light to woo,
Mine, never but the True,
Thanks to the glimpse ye unconsciously lend !

ON A PACKET OF OLD LETTERS*

THE choicest blooms that can be tied
In one sweet posy will decay,
And even ere the charm have died
The fragrance faints away.
But lo ! to these a perfume clings,
Reminding me of vanished things—
These spent effusions, each a flower
Of love that blossomed for an hour.

I lit upon them laid aside
Mementoes of a happier day,
When Life was beauty, hope, and pride,
And Time one lingering May :
Survivors of a kindred host,
Each looks like a returning ghost
Of glory in the tender Past ;
Or some dead joy, embalmed to last :

For as I read, a shadowy crowd
Of fresh young faces smile and glow—
Girls soft and fair, boys brave and proud,
My mates of long ago.

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 9.

TO A REDBREAST

True token of their vows and sighs,
Where are my passionate replies?
For Time and Death have made it plain
That I and these alone remain.

Too strange, too sad, that they outlive
The heads that thought, the hands that penned !
The writings should be fugitive,

 The writers, know no end !
It must be so ; the love that found
An outlet thus, can brook no bound :
A mightier volume will it win
From limits that have pent it in.

Dear hearts, our commune is not spent !
I wing sweet thoughts to your abode :
To waft the happy answers sent,

 Bright angels find a road.
And we shall blend in one glad chime
Beyond the rule of Death and Time,
In Love's pure Realm when fairer flowers
Will flourish thro' immortal hours.

TO A REDBREAST*

THE darling thou of many a heart !
Thus warbling ere the year depart
A calm clear note of praise,

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 6.

OLD POEMS

Sweet echo of the silenced song
Of summer minstrels ; lingering long
To wean sad Nature from the wrong
Of these dark autumn days.

Reviving accents from above
Break Death's monotony with Love,
Calm Faith, unclouded Hope!
Beneath, dank fallen leaves decay,
Around, is settled sunless grey,
Thy music from a golden spray,
Dares man to grieve or mope.

Responsive notes from some near bough
Trill forth as if to disallow
Gloom's menace of return.

Divine duet in many fields
And groves to-day ! the heart that yields
To its monition shall be healed,
And true contentment learn.

Bright angel linking heaven and earth !
Did seraphs supervise thy birth,
And lending guise and tune
Stamp on thy gorget a gay sign
That pent within is fire divine,
As flaming at the year's decline
As mid sweet golden June !

For Nature only would inspire
No lay of satisfied desire,
But one of vain regrets.

TO A REDBREAST

Spring's vanished joy is scarce forgot,
The gentle mate, the trysting grot,
The ivied bank, the mossy spot
 Begemmed with violets.

And Instinct draws no kindly veil
O'er nearing frost, and snow, and hail,
 Spare shelter, scanty food.

Nay that bright eye, and flashing gleam,
Hint that a Genius sits supreme,
To gild near darkness with the dream
 Of distant sunny good.

The carol with thy cheery friend
Is Hope's forecast of winter's end,
 Faith's interim repose :

'Tis that I doubt not ; and this more
Perchance—the interflow of lore
About some strange unearthly shore,
 Your after lot—who knows ?

That music wings me from the tomb
Of past delight, the present gloom,
 The future mystery,
To dwell upon our certain cheer
Thro' the grey autumn of Life's year,
Repose in Him who wipes the tear
 From every human eye.

TO A PAIR OF COMMON SANDPIPERS*

A TRUANT from the open book
That charmed me in yon shady nook,
I let a bright meandering brook
Tell its sweet story,
In soft reminder that a page
Of Nature's volume would engage
My heart, with its bright equipage
Of summer glory.

The murmur brings an azure sky,
A bank of green embroidery,
A kingfisher that flashes by,
Before my vision.
And what delights me even more,
Two forms of beauty sporting o'er
The margin, migrant from a shore
Perchance Elysian.

I love to watch you, fairy things,
Dance down the brink with airy springs
And arch anon your wary wings
In shrilly rapture ;
On stiffened pinions gaily glide,
To pitch upon the other side,
A bridegroom bent upon a bride
He cannot capture !

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs' p. 119.

TO A PAIR OF COMMON SANDPIPERS

Ye wing, from an unearthly strand
Methinks, the lore our hearts demand—
The lovely sylphs that never stand
 In vain reposing,
The forms all tremulous, would tell
How fragile is the fairest spell ;
For Beauty smiles, no sentinel
 In constant posing.

She mocks at rule, coquettes with chance,
And vibrates even as we glance ;
We look away, and lo ! her dance
 Of glee is over.
And haply, too, that wooer's chase
Of his delight from place to place,
Warns all who covet Love's embrace,
 Of Joy the rover.

Too oft the acme of earth's bliss,
The proper prize, the crowning kiss,
When just within our grasp we miss
 In empty straining !
And more—I take you as a type
Of transient being, summer snipe !
Your restless movement, slender pipe,
 And brief remaining,

Appear to bid us, guests of Time,
Trip innocently o'er the slime
 Around Life's river—

OLD POEMS

Now sunny side, and shady now,
Our joys, whatever Love allow,
Our course, one consecrated vow
 To the All-giver.

Mine be it, lovely birds, like you,
While loftier instincts claim their due,
To rate yon gold and green and blue
 At their right measure :
Mine oft, mid summer's dreamy thrall,
The shadowing journey to recall ;
Then vanish swift at autumn fall
 For brighter Pleasure !

TO A WILD STRAWBERRY BLOSSOM *

Too oft we range the deep, or rise
 To the illimitable skies
For thrilling themes, and turn our eyes
 From simple loveliness !
White flower that April rains unfold
To smile beneath May's sunny gold,
No tuneful tongue has ever told
 Of thee what I express !
Pure spirit of the leafy dell
God planted thee, a sentinel
To challenge wrong, a fairy spell
 To ward off foul offence.

* From 'Poems of Life and Death,' p. 25.

TO A WILD STRAWBERRY BLOSSOM

Like one of His bright seraphin :
If Eve had passed thee ere her sin
Would she have dared or cared to win
What cost her Innocence ?

Bred here by Nature—to my mind
Worth myriads of the cultured kind
For all their grandeur—men are blind
Indeed who miss thy charm.

Sweet pledge of dainty fruit, in store
When May maturity is o'er,
Right glad am I that all forbore
To pluck, or do thee harm !

Methinks a sister flower's sweet look
So won some Peer that he forsook
All garden favourites, and took
Her leaves as a device.

The coronet should deck a face
As pure as thine : a lordly race
Should win the meed of ducal grace
Thro' virtue, not thro' vice.

Thou dreamest like a lovely Saint
In some old frame or picture quaint,
Round whom, so free from earthly taint
Is shed an aureole ;

And yet so human that we think
That thro' her help we need not shrink
From sanctity—a kind of link

'Tween Heaven and our vile soul.

OLD POEMS

Thou livest like a pensive maid
Who, born in some secluded glade,
Seeks no removal from the shade
 Of calm obscurity ;
Content, thro' each tame silent hour,
To shed a holy healing power :
Bequeathing, too, a fruitful dower
 When God shall bid her die.

Strange choice, that many should bespeak
The flaunting human flower, few seek
The one so graceful, shy, and meek,
 Yet what if Heaven restrain,
Perhaps, if gathered like the rest,
To nestle proudly in some breast
And be admired, the after quest
 For fruit would be in vain.

Frail blossom ! tho' I should return
To find thee spoiled or spent, and learn
That none who search the site discern
 A berry from thy bloom,
Thou hast not blown in vain ; for here
Is fruit ! the vision ever clear,
The song, too, if it charm one ear
 Or lift one heart from gloom.

ODE TO A BLACKBIRD*

TROLL out thy passion from yon vantage spray
The while I gaze on thee and guess the theme,
Thou Milton among minstrels, whose rich lay
Bespeaks high vision and unearthly dream!
With eye uncurtained thou art blind as he
To all but heaven, tho' a charming world
Outstretched beneath thee spreads her myriad lures.

Throned on a poplar tree
With head elate and jetty pinions furled,
Thou scornest all reply to her gay overtures.

No inspiration yet has made thee sing
A Christmas 'Hymn to the Nativity.'
The thrush alone is left to herald Spring
Mid wintry gloom and inactivity:
But thro' the April laughter thou perchance
Wilt rival his with thine enraptured woe.
Peers are ye both mid commoners of Earth,

Warblers of wild romance,
The key-note of his music, 'l'Allegro';
'Il Penseroso' thine, a melancholy mirth!

Is it mere fancy if I deem thy song
The tale of Comus and his baffled plan—
That thou dost feign the contemplated wrong

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 36.

OLD POEMS

Of virtue by a fiend and his rude clan
Foiled by the guardian spirit of the woods!
Or, am I only dreaming when I think
That thou a new drowned Lycidas dost mourn?
Fluting like one that broods
Over a vanished joy, a riven link
Of Love's encircling chain that broke, and left
him lorn.

Has a bright Paradise been lately lost,
That this rare pathos steeps thy lofty strain?
Did ever dawn a day when to thy cost
The pride of being led thee to disdain
A nobler destiny, or break some law
Of thy bird nature? Or dost thou bewail
A ravaged Eden, a sweet sylvan home
Spoiled by the felon paw
Of predatory weasel, or too frail
While gales are raging, or too plain when school-
boys roam?

Perchance it is for us that plaintive wealth—
That we in wistful audience may steal back
To happier days of innocence and health.
Angel of sadness, robed in tender black
To chant a requiem o'er buried joys,
This melody is but a dream of bowers
Dismantled and forlorn, of beauty flown,
Of love that sin destroys,

ODE TO A BLACKBIRD

Of gardens serpent-haunted, fading flowers,
And outcast feet that now can march to death alone !

But hark—new music ! Paradise regained
Pulses thro' all ; and fitly does the trill
That comforts thee, and keeps our heart enchained
With sunny hope, rise from a golden bill,
A tongue of flame, so eloquent that thou
To shadowed bygones must have bid adieu :
Since Earth holds joy enough to make thee glad—

A mate, no doubt, with vow
Inviolatè as thine, for none could woo
With such delicious breath that lingers lone and sad.

Now none who hears could nurse a woeful Past,
A gloomy Present ! who can fail to feel
That evil's haunting curse shall never last,
That strenuous Life shall break the mortal seal ?
Our wintry world shall flame to Love's embrace
As Earth now flushes to the kiss of Spring.
Thou high evangelist whose mellow tale

Is gospel to our Race,
No loftier Pæan did rapt Milton sing
O'er that apostasy which Grace did countervail !

As Samson Agonistes, both in life
And death, brought ruin on Philistine foes,
Stop thro' thy tuneful breath the worldly strife
Of tongues, and at the finish silence those
Whose Dagon dares to deem it not Divine !

OLD POEMS

Ah ! what has hushed thee ? flitting into shade,
All seems the poorer for thy music stilled :
 Yet shall this heart of mine
For ever hear in arbour, dell and glade
Sweet echoes of the tale that thou to-day hast
 trilled !

TO A YELLOW-HAMMER*

THOU gay familiar of the hours
 I consecrate to birds and flowers,
In laughing lanes and bramble bowers !
 And oft before me flitting
When calm autumnal sunset glows,
Or whirlwinds drive the wintry snows ;
Mid summer eglantine and rose
 To-day, I spy thee sitting.

A guardian of the maze beneath,
The bank beside, the circling heath—
Where'er it be that flowers enwreath
 Thy mate, mid grass and nettle,
Upon the marbled eggs I fain
Would peer at, but that thy refrain
Seems Orpheus-like the feet to chain
 That might her pose unsettle.

* From 'Poems of Life and Death,' p. 64.

TO A YELLOW-HAMMER

So shrill the song, so tame the muse,
Wise Nature lent thee golden hues
To charm their eye whose ears refuse,
 Enchanted not, to listen.

Blithe children sporting in the hay,
And pensive men, and lovers gay,
Oft wander to the furze or spray
 When they behold thee glisten.

Vain dreamers who in sunshine bask,
And mowers pausing in their task,
Glance up, as I do now, and ask
 What story is he telling,
Yon lovely bird whose plumage blends
With hedgerow, herb, and gorse ; who spends
Such pathos in the note which ends
 That monotone outswelling ?

The love-lay to thy brooding mate
Be sure each spirit will translate
In music that reflects its state ;
 Mine hears thy tongue repeating
' Life's river bubble—then Death's main ;
Time's chaff and stubble—then pure grain :
Earth's care and trouble—then Heaven's gain,
 Long rest, for turmoil fleeting !'

TO A FLOCK OF SISKINS*

How ye tumble, turn and twist
Mid the chilly morning-mist,
Looking, in your motley dress
Clear and clean against the snow,
And your giddy happiness
While ye flutter to and fro,
Like gay boys and girls who, leaving
School, forget their toil and grieving!
Cling and clamber, toy and gleam
On the alder by the stream!
Winging then your way to where
Thistles flourish, from whose crown
Pull the seed that thro' the air
Like yourselves floats up and down!
And the silver birch low bending
Might be well your ramble's ending.
Nay, ye neither rest nor tire,
Tho' I would your tints admire!
Never birds have I beheld
Half so childlike in their ways—
None who ever so rebelled
When they knew I wished to gaze!
Aspen leaves and twinkling ocean
Vaunt not such perpetual motion.

* From 'Musings and Melodies,' p. 63.

TO A FLOCK OF SISKINS

Quick, your beauty let me trace
While the catkins ye embrace !
What a wealth of olive green,
Black and yellow, chastely blent,
Smiles upon me now between
Yon low branches brookward bent,
Ye the while like girls advancing
To the glass and shyly glancing !

Could your tuneful tongues but sing
Now, as in melodious Spring,
If my fancy versatile
Were to mate you every one
In a green Atlantic isle,
Sporting in a tropic sun,
I should deem you each a fairy
Ocean-wind swept, wild canary.

Nature ! thanks for this surprise.
Winter ! welcome, if our eyes,
Robbed of bloom and foliage, rest
Thro' the rigour of thy frost
On so many a charming guest,
Else to our rapt vision lost.
Birds of beauty ! tho' we sever
Now, cling on to memory ever !

LOST AND FOUND*

I FOUND it yesterday, the Book,
That 'with a Mother's blessing' traced
Upon the title page I took

When first the world I faced.
Young, thoughtless, gay, I little dreamed
With what delight the volume teemed ;
I guessed not till I bade adieu,
The Blessing's worth, but then I knew—

I knew it mid the loneliness
Of vanished smile and voice, I felt
That something of her last caress

In those dear pages dwelt—
Still dwells, for nothing now is gone
That then appeared to linger on ;
The magic of her prayers and tears
Has vanquished the decay of years.

I knew it, for the heart's fair flowers
Unfold to rain, and sunshine bright.
The Blessing blew reviving showers,

The Book brought heavenly light.
I knew it well when I began
The due fulfilment of her plan,
That every morn, and eve, should find
One passage graven on the mind.

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 46.

LOST AND FOUND

I knew it better in the hour
Of strife with many a battling sin,
For, tutored thus, I chilled the power
Of fire that blazed within.

I might have known it better still,
But for self-seeking and self-will.
Dark augury of fatal cost,
That Book unstudied, slighted, lost !

Bright omen ! it is found again,
And will be kept for evermore,
A pledge that I shall re-obtain
The wealth I used to store.
Ah ! happy he who, man or boy,
Has never forfeited that joy,
But counted it of nobler worth
Than all the gain of glittering Earth.

Blind fools, we have to handle dross
Before we know the feel of gold !
True opulence we scorn, till loss

An empty tale has told.
Dear Mother, if from thine abode
Thou viewest aught on life's sad road,
Mark these late tears, this true regret,
And see ! thy Blessing haunts me yet.

REVIVALS*

O H ! there are summer days
That focus all the glory of the June,
Their spell ineffable ; we can but gaze,
And feel they wane too soon.

When the hot landscape thirsts,
And thunder rumbles, and dark rain-clouds frown,
Oft ere we think it ripe, the tempest bursts
To shower refreshment down.

On many a winter night,
O'er some smooth road to death the moon has shone,
And travellers turning in the gleam of light
Have walked securely on.

Oft on a moorland waste
Fresh springs upbubble mid green herb and flower,
Which, if the weary wanderer kneel to taste,
He rises with new power.

Seaward for many a mile
We trudge, unblest by billowy spray and roar,
When lo ! green meadow-land, an open stile,
A glimpse of the far shore.

Nature uncurtains oft
Such glad surprises, and their charm I know ;
But what revives the spirit from aloft
Eclipses all below !

* From ' Lyrical Studies,' p. 46.

REVIVALS

Ah ! there are hours of life
Worth the full tale of others ten times told,
When Beauty wins us from our care and strife
Her story to unfold.

Hours when the wistful heart
Views dimly what is mirrored in Earth's best,
And faintly comprehends what shaping Art
Has never half expressed :

Or when relentless Truth
Flames to the full, and with anointed eyes
We watch the fancied wealth of age and youth
Fade, in their rainbow guise ;

Fade like the sunset glow
That crimsons, to forsake, grey chilly plains,
Yet gazing on we see the riches grow,
That wax, as being wanes :

Hours when in calm review
The dead file past us in procession sad ;
And Conscience whispers, ' Hadst thou been more
true,
Their lot had been more glad.'

Hours when a ray has flashed
And lit our life-work to the judgment seat,
While we, faint loiterers, trembling and abashed,
Stand, barred from all retreat :

OLD POEMS

Moments of insight keen
When self must into condemnation pass ;
For plain as day is what we might have been,
And what we are alas !

Moments when Love reveals
Glory unguessed of, when His magic spell
Finds a lost heart, its flaming deep unseals,
To make a heaven of hell.

Moments when choice is given ;
Right plays the angel, Wrong the subtle fiend,
And, impulse waking, habit's chains are riven,
While souls from sin are weaned.

Bright sunny hours they are,
When spirit-buds, unfolding, sweetly bloom :
Each gleams to memory, a glistening star
To gem the midnight gloom.

Each, thus divinely spent,
Outweighs millenniums of delight or fame.
Call them not hours ! Eternity has lent
To these some truer name.

Times are there when one look
Tells more than a life's language would explain—
Feelings and hopes that none has e'er mistook,
Wide worlds of joy or pain ;

Times when rare smiles are born,
By memory cherished in immortal green,
As fresh this moment, as the vows then sworn,
Tho' long years intervene.

TO A SILKWORM MOTH

O happy, happy tides,
Pure springs that ripple mid life's dusty length!
But for the charm that in your bubbling hides
Who could renew his strength?

Yet even thus we faint,
So hot the way, so far our native clime
Save for the glimpse responsive to our plaint,
Caught from some field of Time.

Thou fair eternal Sea,
Thou glistening term of all the weary miles,
So hazy oft, shine out beyond the lea,
And change our tears to smiles!

TO A SILKWORM MOTH*

THOU shade of life ! no spectre pale
Has flitted down a moonlit vale
Of tears, past evil to bewail,
More wan and hoary.
Doth Nature scorn thy pedigree
Of toil, that thus she fashions thee
Alone of thy fraternity
Devoid of glory ?

The moth that pictures mortal things,
The tiger with brocaded wings
Both share the leisured life that clings
To earth's enjoyment :

* From 'Poems of Life and Death,' p. 56.

OLD POEMS

The silvery night and golden day
Wake lovely forms that find in play
Mid starry beam and sunny ray
 Their sole employment.

But thou a course unique hast run
Of training ere thy wealth was spun—
Of growth at various stages won
 By mortal anguish ;
And now, the last transition o'er
Thy destiny seems not to soar
As they, but simply gender more
 Like thee, and languish.

And yet, methinks, a pencil true
Has painted thee of pallid hue :
To common tints we bid adieu !

 Or soon neglect them :
But all who look at thee will task
Imagination, and may ask
The meanings of thy tender mask,
 And recollect them.

Tho' none beholding it could dare
To credit thee with human care
That Earth's sad ministry may bear
 The fruit we treasure ;
Yet life its worth from service draws
And thou art bound by vital laws :
So fame at least be thine, because
 Thou scornest pleasure !

TO A SILKWORM MOTH

Some hearts that silken fancies weave
May, taught by thee, forbear to grieve
If dull contemporaries leave

 Their outcome slighted.

Go spin a rare cocoon, pale bard,
And let its spell thy spirit guard !
Posterity the clews will card,
 May be delighted.

Thou ghost of hope, thou phantom joy !
Perhaps for good to some vain boy
Who found in tending thee employ

 For leisure season,

Thy spectral plumage may recall
Bright lawns, green mulberries, and all
The wingèd loves whose silken thrall
 Snared heart and reason.

Could any who observe thee fail
To recollect the glistening bale
Whose threads thou patiently didst trail

 To shroud thy changing?

Now woven deftly and perchance
Adorning some patrician dance,
Bedecking a fair girl whose glance
 The room is ranging.

And better still—some hearts that brood
O'er thy pure form, in pensive mood
May in its moonlight grace find food

OLD POEMS

To nourish duty—
May deem it images the worth
Of calm self-sacrifice on Earth,
And note that toil and pain give birth
To spirit-beauty.

Leave green and purple, pink and gold,
To caterpillars vain that hold
No silken wealth, and but unfold
For empty splendour !
But thou, a silvery worm and fly,
So teach our earthliness to die
That saintly souls we live on high,
Our like to gender !

Content to linger but the shade
Of our congeners, till we fade,
Of nether being disarrayed,
Perhaps for ever ;
But sure, if so, of Life unseen
In cloudless glory, bliss serene,
And memories of joy terrene
That perish never.

THE SUM OF DUTY*

FROM birth,
Thro' gradual life
What doth thy manhood ask
Of thee, ordained to rise from Earth
To Heaven, thro' light and shadow, calm and strife?
Self-conquest, and the due fulfilment of thy task,
Truth, honour, mercy, love and holy dread;
The play of every power, remembering
The brevity of mortal breath :
And then to bow the head
Before thy King
In death.

TO THE EARLIEST SNOWDROP†.

MY music can but do thee wrong ;
The firstborn of a stainless throng
Deserves as delicate a song
As ever poet sung :
Yet all that bids the heart rejoice
Demands expression thro' the voice,
And thine enchantment leaves no choice
To any tuneful tongue.

* From 'Music from the Maze,' p. 156.

† From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 28.

OLD POEMS

Pure child of Winter's ripe old age
By fresh young Spring! thy parentage
Unveils itself in every stage

Of tender life and growth :

Paternal snow, maternal green,
Lend twofold beauty to thy mien,
And, tho' thy cast toward her lean,
Stamp thee as born of both.

A sunny jubilee he kept,
Then rainbowed tears of passion wept,
The day thy loveliness upleapt

In such ethereal grace :

The while she kissed and fondled thee,
Well pleased that, tho' ill-mated, he
Ere dying, left as legacy

His look in thy young face.

To name thee, Heaven and Earth can yield
Fair types—a sacred Truth revealed ;

A white resolve, or wish concealed,

Till now in some dark breast ;

A maiden early called from sleep

Due matin rites and vows to keep ;

A holy face that bends to weep

O'er stormy Earth's unrest ;

The welcome babe that first appears ;

The beauty that no rival fears ;

The hoary saint bowed down by years ;

Each lend an image true :

TO THE EARLIEST SNOWDROP

But oh! the sweetest to my mind
Shall feign thee one of angel kind,
Pitched on our tearful world to find
 Sad spirits she may woo.

A seraph monitor, to whom
We turn amid encircling gloom,
Comparing her unsullied bloom
 With Earth o'er which she bends.
The solitary grace that hides
From common criticism chides
Our lust for eulogy, and guides
 The heart to nobler ends.

The spotlessness that fought its way
Mid boisterous wind and hidden ray
Points loftier children of the clay
 To purity and light ;
And, glorious parable! where one
Brave flower has thus the strife begun,
A bevy struggle to the sun
 Cloud-canopied or bright.

Ah, blessings on thee! thou hast taught
Me patience here—no holy thought
Has ever blossomed but has brought
 Full many in its train :
No longing steals thro' earthly rift
To claim warm Heaven's fostering gift,
But a meek virgin host uplift
 Their suit, nor pray in vain.

OLD POEMS

What bitter trouble ever froze
The human heart, but there uprose
A budding beauty to uncloze
 Ere long in flowering white?
And never knew I one glad spot
Discerned by any, but his lot
Was gemmed with springing joys begot
 By musing on the sight.

The first calm silver of the sky
Has hardly caught the ravished eye
Before a throng steal out to vie
 With that pure herald star.
This sunny hour it may be so
With many a sister bloom below :
A quick adieu ! ere others blow
 Thy sole prestige to mar.

A SONG FOR THE WEARY *

DOTH it appear so strange
That in the world's wide range
Mortals in constant change
 Find not repose?
Man, thou art Nature's guest
Banqueting on her best!
All to thy eager quest
 Will she disclose.

* From 'Lyrics and Elegiacs,' p. 8.

A SONG FOR THE WEARY

Yet hath she never heard,
Never, of one sweet word :
No tuneful bee or bird

Sets it to song.

Rest is the word, and lo !

To a dim long-ago

All of it thou dost know

Can but belong.

Will the winds teach it thee ?

Could the inconstant sea,

Sunbeam in glancing glee,

Or twinkling star ?

Mariners ocean-tossed,

We, to our bitter cost,

Thro' life's sad mist have lost

Gleams from afar.

But that kind seraphs flit

Round thee to whisper it,

Would not false sense outwit

Memory's truth ?

But for the spirit's fire,

But for the heart's desire,

But that Earth's pleasures tire

Even fresh youth !

Weary and fugitive,

Foiled of it while we live,

Earth but one rest can give,

OLD POEMS

Calm, in the dust.
Seek it not here, but there
In the bright Glory where
Live the Divinely fair,
Gentle, and just!

HYMN TO RIGHTEOUSNESS*

ART thou a stranger in our Universe,
The lovely disappointing realm of sense
Where even Beauty blooms beneath a curse,
That Nature thro' her vast circumference
Seems alien to thee, as to noon the night.
Her unregenerate brood
Start at thy footfall, and prepare for flight,
As in a withering wood,
Leaves flutter at the whisper of the gust
That soon shall sweep them to their native dust.
If an exotic from a sunny Clime,
Would that Earth found for thee a kindlier haunt !
In this cold atmosphere of wrong and crime
When wilt thou flower ? Like icy gales that daunt
The snowdrop's bravery, tempestuous airs
Retard thy silent growth :
Impassioned groans and murmurs and despairs
Conspire with chilly sloth

* From 'Lyrical Studies,' p. 73, where this poem is called
'Hymn to Morality.'

HYMN TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

To baffle thine activity, and spoil
Thy settlement in our ungenial soil.

And so thy gleams are fitful as the rays
That pierce the gloom of a sad wintry morn,
Welcome, if pledges of meridian blaze,
But cruel as the shafts of flashing scorn
If the day darken, and the rain-clouds mass.

O spite beyond compare !
O grief no earthly anguish could surpass !
If but in promise fair,
Before our ravished eyes thy beams should dart,
Yet thy full splendour never bless our heart !

But no, my curious spirit tracks a clue
Mid all the dark entanglement of life ;
Somewhat of righteous purpose glimmers thro'
The wrong and ill, the pain, the savage strife !
Naught harms or suffers fruitlessly, I feel,

Or draws an empty breath :
The mortal all tends to immortal weal,
Birth, life, and seeming death :
The Jesuit Nature cloaks her hand in vain ;
She plays for thee, why should she fence or feign ?

Unmasked, she would reveal a vital core
Steeped in thy very essence: 'tis her dross
(The clay that clogs, the all too base to soar)
That flees thy presence to its proper loss ;

OLD POEMS

Or else, if fraught with semi-consciousness,
Measures its might with thine,
And strives to throw, and strangle, or suppress ;
So crippling thy design,
That now, tho' ever militant, thy reign
In cloudless empire seems a vision vain—

Seems but a vision vain, yet even so,
That chronic warfare, that discomfiture,
Is but a master-stroke for thee, I know,
A ruse to make thy final sway more sure.
Beauty, thy loyal agent, moves and works
Mid all the dubious strife :
From sad arenas where dark horror lurks
She wins a fuller life :
Thy temporary loss I deem as naught
To the rich gain that plenitude has brought.

The changeful show, the fluctuating scene,
The shifting panorama that displays
Now stormy battle, now a calm serene,
While working thro' uncomprehended ways
Smooths in unconscious lives a path for thee.
The quivering light and shade,
The migrant flock, the swarming fly and bee,
The rose that flowers to fade,
The crane-fly, pinioned by the butchering strike,
The sportive minnow, and the murderous pike,

HYMN TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

They serve thee, knowing not: thro' Earth's wild
tears,

Like a soft rainbow in Heaven's altitude,
A prophecy of sunshine oft appears,
As tho' a God with foes still unsubdued
Laughed in calm triumph ; as if quenchless Hope
Unfurled the colours fair
To cheer His legions up the difficult slope,
Lest any should despair
Of us poor mortals militant below,
Who claim the comfort, and reflect the glow.

The Force Divine that faintly glimmering
Thro' brute creation in the casual spark
Of Love and Truth in every conscious thing
Shines with a clearer glory mid the dark
Of human life : vext spirits of our kind
(Like seagulls that gleam bright
Against black skies, and battle with the wind)
Soar in thy livery white,
A herald throng, and brave the fiercest gale,
In pledge that thy fair cause shall yet prevail—

Shall yet prevail—dupes of Time's gradual ~~cause~~ ^{growth},
Slaves of the partial, so we speak, for Earth
Wears but the colours and employs the force
To which our prisoned consciousness gives birth.

OLD POEMS

We, before whom successive ages roll,
Deem thee but faintly shewn ;
Perchance immortal eyes that view the whole
Perceive a steadfast Throne,
Whereon sits One whose Image is as thine,
Who ever flames, could we but see Him shine.
What if this strange and sadly chequered show
Be the back woof of some grand tapestry ?
Dark cross-work void of method, from below,
Where naught save blind confusion meets the eye,
But with full symmetry of rare design
When looked at from above
In texture peerless, wrought with skill Divine
A-glow with hues of Love ;
Yet even so, the gradual Time-view
To our sense-bounded consciousness *seems* true,
So true that I would fain devote to thee
And thy dread conflict all that life may bring ;
Since with thine empire a supreme Decree
Has linked the perfect bliss of everything.
Benignant Might! swift be thine onward way,
Swifter than lagging Time,
And changeless as Eternity thy sway ;
That in harmonious chime
May rise a pæan wherein this full heart
That pines to praise thee claims a humble part !



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